Mbuti Hunter-Gatherers and Rainforest Conservation in the Ituri Forest, Zaïre

Justin Kenrick

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ABSTRACT

Based on anthropological fieldwork in Zaire, this thesis focuses on the relationship between Mbuti hunter-gatherers, their Bila farming neighbours and their forest environment. Earlier descriptions of Mbuti/Bila relations as being essentially one of opposition (e.g. those of Colin Turnbull) are shown to reflect the nature of colonial control rather than the fundamental interdependence which exists between these two groups. The way people attempt to cope with extractive economic forces is examined historically and in present Mbuti involvement in gold extraction. Local responses to the Forest Reserve (created in 1992) are shown to range from viewing it as resource appropriation to viewing it as a marriage.

The author's study of daily Mbuti life in the forest highlights the importance of economic exchange with the Bila, and the impact of broader political forces. Conflict, gender and power are examined in the Bila/Mbuti nkumbi circumcision ritual, and in the Mbuti molimo ritual. For the Mbuti and the Bila the forest is not sacred in itself: the interactions of past generations with the forest render it sacred. This experience of the forest encompasses fearing sorcery and the evil spirits of the dead, and attempting to control and manipulate - or trusting, joking and sharing with - the "forest as ancestors". The nature of the Mbuti net hunt, demand-sharing, and sharing with the forest in song and ritual, are ultimately centred in egalitarianism and their strong identification with the forest.

The argument advanced in this thesis supports that of writers such as Nurit Bird-David and Tim Ingold who argue that identity, for the Mbuti and other hunter-gatherers, can be grounded in a sense of sharing with a living environment. However it collapses Ingold's absolute opposition between Mbuti and Western approaches to the environment: arguing that - although Mbuti cosmology tends towards an identification with the environment, and Cartesian cosmology tends towards a belief in separation and opposition - in practice both the Mbuti and people in the West move between these opposing modes. Conservation projects in the Ituri are shown to embody a Cartesian cosmology which sees humans as separate from the environment, the latter being essentially a passive realm for humans to exploit or protect. Recent developments in these projects, combined with policies which would support local peoples' cosmology of inclusion, suggests a conservation approach which seeks to deepen, rather than restrain, local peoples' involvement with their environment.

DECLARATION

I have composed this thesis myself, on the basis of my own work,

Justin Kenrick

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PART I: CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL ECOLOGY

The Mbuti and Bila in the Ituri Forest are subject to the disruptive presence of external extractive forces, and to the imposition of policies of exclusion by the newly created Forest Reserve. Such policies are seen as emanating from a 'Western' cosmology, and the 'West' as an analytic category is discussed. Development and conservation policies are seen as embodying an understanding of power and passivity in which the possibility of indigenous creativity is rendered invisible.

THE MBUTI AND CONSERVATION

The Ituri Forest consists of that part of the Central African rainforest which is situated on the upper watershed of the Ituri River in north eastern Zaire, it is approximately 70,000 km^2 in area. Most of it is sparsely populated with less than one person per square kilometre outside of the few large towns. There are between 30,000 and 40,000 semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers including the Mbuti net hunters and Efe archers, and roughly 140,000 shifting cultivators including the Lese, Bila and Ndaka (Hart 1984). In May 1992 the Zairian government and Western conservation organisations created a 13,000 km^2 Forest Reserve to protect the central Ituri Forest from the deforestation rapidly underway in Central Africa. It is an area in which approximately 28,000 villagers and perhaps 10,000 Mbuti and Efe live (Curran 1992).

This thesis seeks to understand the place of the Mbuti in a web of relationships which includes the forest, their Bila farming neighbours, and outside forces including anthropologists and conservation itself. The first part of the thesis examines the impact of colonial and post-colonial forces on Zaire in general, and on the Bila and the Mbuti in particular. The body of the thesis focuses on the nature of Mbuti relations with the Bila and the forest, and the impact of the Forest Reserve on them; and in so doing it contrasts hunter-gatherer and Western understandings of the relationship between humans and their environment.

Rainforest conservation - in the form of the establishment of forest reserves by Western conservation bodies - is largely driven by the same Western paradigm and power relations which are themselves the main cause of deforestation. This paradigm, in which humans are seen as essentially separate from the rest of the environment (Brown 1990, Caldwell 1990, Carley & Christie 1992: 69-72), has informed conservation in the Ituri through policies which seek to restrain human involvement with the forest. There is a very different

paradigm[1] of human - environmental relations evident among hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti (Bird-David 1992b, Ingold 1994b) and evident both in the changing shape of conservation strategies for the Ituri, and in recent developments in scientific and anthropological discourse in the West (e.g. Willis 1994). These developments argue for a conservation strategy in which the desire to *deepen* human involvement replaces the attempt to *restrain* human involvement with the rest of the environment. Meanwhile parallel changes in development studies (e.g. Schrijvers 1995) argue for an approach to research which I adopt in this thesis. This approach does not seek to render the researcher invisible, but takes the researcher's presence in the field and in the text as an opportunity for, rather than as an obstacle to, understanding.[2]

The immediate threat to the forest comes from the influx of incomers clearing large areas of forest to grow crops, often to exchange for gold from gold panners. The gold panners arrive from many corners of Zaire, and most do little but eke out a precarious existence before either returning to their regions of origin or clearing forest to settle down as farmers. Many of the incomers who clear large areas to grow cash crops are Nande farmers from Kivu, the region to the east of the Ituri. Many are victims of landlessness in Kivu (Peterson 1989, 1991, 1992, Kenrick 1992b, 1993b), and often are drawn into the Ituri by the lure of gold (Chapter 4), disrupting both the forest itself and traditional relations between the Mbuti and the Bila. Zaire's unstable political climate protects areas such as the Ituri from the devastation being wrecked in south-east Cameroun where relative stability enables 'development' in the form of forest destruction by Western logging companies.

If political stability were to arrive in Zaire, the threat of economic 'development' to the forest and to the long-term livelihoods of local people would intensify rapidly. In the meantime, the creation of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (referred to throughout this thesis as the Forest Reserve) enables a weak central government to assert relative control over this area through the work of Western conservation-oriented non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As such, it harks back to the nineteenth century colonial government granting large areas of forest to European companies to control and exploit, since the colonial

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1 Chambers defines a paradigm as "a pattern of ideas, values, methods and behaviour which fit together and are mutually reinforcing" (1995: 32).

2 Schrijvers claims that a "neo-positivist methodology, adopted from the natural sciences, treated people as objects about whom knowledge was to be collected dispassionately . . .What was considered 'value-free' research is now seen as an obfuscation of the power relationships involved" (1995: 19-20). Analyses such as Schrijvers' usefully point to the advantages of acknowledging one's subjective presence in the field, and of using this as a way of arriving at a clearer picture of the situation. They tend, however, to assume a model in which power relationships are understood in terms of oppression (Scheper-Hughes 1995), rather than seen as reciprocal (Okely 1975) and potentially beneficial for both parties.

government was too weak to control them itself (Harms 1974: 11-13). However, conservationists themselves are clearly motivated by the desire to protect the forest from present pressures, and to forestall future devastation by Western companies should stability arrive.

Early versions of the plans for the Forest Reserve were strongly influenced by the anthropologist Colin Turnbull's classic study of the Mbuti (1961, 1965, 1983). His study is built on the notion of a structural opposition between the Mbuti, living in harmony in the world of the forest, and the world of the road, where the Bila villagers fear the surrounding forest and - in clearing their fields - are forever battling against their forest environment in order to survive. Turnbull characterises Mbuti cosmology as being founded on trust in their benevolent forest which is regarded as both mother and father to them (1965: 252); and he characterises Bila cosmology as being centred in their fear and mistrust of the forest (1965: 21), in fearing and seeking their ancestors' intervention, and in fearing witchcraft and sorcery (1965: 60). In Turnbull's eyes the Mbuti's fragile forest of Eden will inevitably be broken by the intrusion of modern forces (1961 [1993]: 9).

The structural opposition described by Turnbull was in fact a transient moment at the height of Belgian colonial power when the villagers were forbidden from entering the forest and were forced to farm by the road to produce cotton and other crops in lieu of taxes. Having to manipulate the Mbuti into working their fields to help produce the required cotton, was the last in a long chain of exploitative extractive relations emanating from commercial decisions made in Europe, and made possible by colonial control. A preoccupation with Turnbull's structural opposition obscures the dynamic movement between forest and village which is central to both Mbuti and Bila identity - both prior to the effective imposition of Belgian restrictions, and since independence. The situation now is one where - ironically - the imposition of the Forest Reserve might attempt to recreate that frozen moment, believing it to reflect the underlying reality, or might treat the Bila and Mbuti equally by offering development opportunities in exchange for restricting their access to the forest.

In the first version of the plans for the Forest Reserve (Blom 1992), the Mbuti were respectfully placed on the 'state of nature' side of the nature/human divide, as a result of the powerful portrayal of Mbuti life conveyed in Turnbull's writing. The plan included the proposals that a five kilometre restriction be placed on villagers access to the forest; while the Mbuti would be allowed to move freely in the forest, although their hunting range would be restricted to one day's walk from the road (Blom 1992). The conservation plan

was a perfect embodiment of the Western opposition between humans and the environment, up to and including the peculiar position of hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti: which side of the divide should they be on?

There has been disagreement between the different conservation groups operating in the Ituri as to exactly how to modify these earlier plans for the forest reserve. The emerging consensus is to allow the Bila and established incomers to remain in their villages farming a limited area, and for the villages to remain in the same location, ultimately establishing agricultural methods based on permanent rather than shifting cultivation (Curran 1992). Together with registration of the population, this is seen as enabling further immigration into the Ituri, and further encroachment on the forest by villagers, to be restricted. In return, the inhabitants will receive permission to remain in the buffer zones beside the road where farming and subsistence hunting are permitted. Here, small scale economic development initiatives will be offered in exchange for the loss of access to former roadside village sites and to the deep forest. The Mbuti would be allowed to continue to use traditional hunting methods, while their exchange of bushmeat with Bila traders would be restricted. Local peoples' adverse reactions to these proposals has centred on the restriction on traditional village movement and on Mbuti-Bila exchanges, and on doubt about the arrival of development opportunities, rather than on the longer term changes which permanent agricultural practices, and the restriction on access to the more distant parts of the forest, will involve.

This modified plan (Curran 1992) usefully attempts to pre-empt the possibility of logging, to limit the extraction of charcoal, gold and bushmeat for distant markets, and focuses on the need to pre-empt immigration through seeking land security for the Nande in Kivu. However, creating development initiatives as compensation for restricting local peoples' access to the forest can create a magnet which draws people away from their relationship with the forest, or into the Ituri from beyond the forest edge. Instead, the need is to find ways to allow villagers, Mbuti and those immigrants who choose to stay to deepen their involvement and identification with the forest. Crucial to supporting local people is the recognition that where they are subject to external control - be it corrupt government or conservation officials, or outsiders intent on short-term enrichment from the long-term destruction of the local subsistence base - then local people will be at the forefront of forest destruction.

The key to the situation in the Ituri is to identify that power dynamics can work both ways. If conservation seeks to protect local peoples' relationship with their environment from

abusive power relations, then it can act to defuse the chain of exploitation emanating from Western extractive demands, which end up destroying the forest environment through a million different individual actions. At one end of this chain of relationships the West's demand for cheap raw materials has maintained an abusive political system in Zaire. More specifically, that system (coupled with the West's demand for cheap cash crops) has enabled the powerful to displace small landowners in Kivu, with consequent pressure on the relationship between Bila, Mbuti, and forest. More locally still, this system has, for example, enabled a corrupt Bila Chef de Groupement to be imposed on local people against their wishes: replacing a traditional chief whose purpose had not been wealth extraction but the maintenance of good relations among local people. This chain of abusive power relationships is felt right down to the molimo ritual - which for months was happening almost nightly in the Mbuti hunting camp in the forest. In this context the arrival in camp of the molimo trumpet, and the fool who often accompanies it (highlighting and resolving conflicts through humour), and the ensuing night long singing, was partly a way of coping with the threats, imprisonments and demands for bushmeat made by this corrupt Chef de Groupement.

In this analysis, rather than imposing conservation regulations, the basis for sustainable social and environmental relations lies in the 'selfish' long-term interest of local peoples themselves. An interest which, for the Mbuti and the Bila, is expressed in terms of respect for their ancestors who inhabit, and are, the forest. Sustainability lies in the strength of the relationship between individual Mbuti, Bila and the forest as expressed in cosmology, and as experienced in everyday economic and social exchange. In this sense the appreciation for the ousted chief - who had had local peoples interests at heart; and the molimo - entered into as a way of restoring healthy relationship within an environment which includes people as an aspect of the environment - are examples of the power of sustainable relationships attempting to withstand the imposition of extractive forces.

THE 'WEST' AS AN ANALYTIC CATEGORY

The 'West' is a term which will be used throughout this thesis, and I should at this juncture acknowledge that the term has often been awkwardly used as if it accurately represented such things as geographical area (e.g. countries bordering the North Atlantic), an economic or political system (e.g. capitalism or democracy), or a particular cosmology (e.g. scientific thought). As such the term tends to simply restate a belief in the old divide between coloniser and colonised, literate and nonliterate, the 'modern' and the 'primitive', the 'affluent world' and the 'third world', without necessarily acknowledging either the vast

diversity of social experience within any of the particular catch-all definitions or the inappropriateness of the opposing categories themselves[3]. Whatever the purported definition it is usually used as a way of describing an 'us' who are powerful, as opposed to a 'them' who are not. And this latter definition - 'the West' understood in terms of power - is meaningful both as a self-definition of those who consider themselves Westerners, and as a powerfully meaningful category for those who do not. Although the usefulness of 'the West' as an analytic category has been profoundly questioned by many writers (e.g. Carriere 1992, 1995), at a recent ASA conference "the most vociferous opposition to the analytic abolition of the West" came from non-Western anthropologists. They retorted: "if it is not the West, what is it that swamps our domestic markets, fills our television and radio broadcasts, and sets our academic agendas?" (Spencer 1995: 251)

The term 'the West' is used in this thesis in two (initially distinct) ways. In chapters 2, 3 and 4 it is used when describing the colonial and post-colonial encounter between Zairian people and those political and economic forces emanating from industrial countries: countries whose industrialisation and wealth has depended upon the unequal economic and political relations embedded in this encounter (Levi-Strauss 1977: 316, Wolf 1982: 22-23, Vansina 1990). In these chapters the specific impacts of this relation on the Mbuti and the Bila are discussed. The use of the term 'the West' takes on a less politically charged and more culturally specific meaning in the body of the thesis: here it refers less to the exercise of power and more to the production of knowledge, to a dominant way of knowing evident in the sciences in general and in anthropological accounts of the Mbuti in particular.

The 'West', like any dominant discourse according to Foucault, is situated "at the points where networks of power and networks of knowledge production cross" (Foulkes 1994: 450). Whilst initially this thesis focuses on the West in terms of networks of power, and later focuses on networks of knowledge production, ultimately this production of knowledge and imposition of power are indivisible. A specifically Western way of knowing is embodied in specific conservation proposals and in specific ways in which anthropological writing persistently reinterprets hunter-gatherers experience to sit comfortably within the terms by which Western discourse claims people in general experience the world. However, not only are such conservation proposals unworkable and counter productive, and not only do such anthropological misinterpretations misconstrue Mbuti reality, they emanate from a profound misreading of social experience among those

3 Within the social sciences some of the ways the divide is represented is as being between hot and cold (Levi-Strauss), mechanical and organic (Durkheim), and pre capitalist and capitalist (Marx) societies.

who consider themselves to be Westerners. It is not only that 'we' (Westerners) misinterpret 'their' reality, 'we' misinterpret our own.

Whereas the dominant Western discourse continues to insist that order can only be arrived at by being imposed on 'the other' (for example a conservation area, ethnographic material, one's emotions, society, nature, or children); not only hunter-gatherer experience but also recent developments in Western science consistently refute this fundamental premise of Western discourse. These include, for example, developments in the psychology of perception, the understanding of mother-child relations, and the neurological interpretation of the interplay between reason and emotion. These developments suggest that - although the Western paradigm insists that order must be imposed on otherwise chaotic experience (e.g. Douglas 1966: 36) - the ordering of perception, relations and thought is in fact an inherent quality and activity which emerges out of the relationship between the perceiver and their environment (Reed 1982, Costall 1986, both following Gibson 1979; Cutting 1982), and is already present in the new-born infant consciously relating to its mother (Trevarthen & Logotheti 1989, Trevarthen 1993). Damasio (1994) demonstrates that bodily sensations, gut feelings and emotions are at the heart of the minds decision making process, that emotion is at the heart of reason rather than being opposed to it. The tenacious persistence of the Western belief in the necessary denial of authentic experience, in the necessity for a separate and superior sphere to impose order on experience for it to make sense, is not borne out by such developments but rather is revealed as the fundamental self-reproducing strategy of our present psychological and material economies (Lindstrom 1995).

If I am engaged in a "rhetoric of authenticity" (Spencer 1995: 240) it is not an attempt to claim that 'the other' is the location of authenticity - whether that be the 'primitive other', the 'child', the 'emotions', or the 'local community' - it is to claim that recognising ourselves in 'the other' and 'the other' in ourselves works towards dissolving this fundamental Western premise of opposition and control through a recognition of the reality of relationship. In recognising this, one recognises that concepts such as that of the 'intellect' or the 'West' have often been used as learnt strategies for othering, for creating an opposition between the controlling thought and the embodied experience (Foucault in Morris 1991: 439-440).

The bodily learning of the Cartesian world view underpinning scientific, and subsequently capitalist, economies of knowledge and production is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, in a nutshell: the division inherent in the Cartesian world view at the base of

science posits a simultaneous creation of subjectivity and objectivity, in which personal 'subjective' experience is devalued and denied, while so-called 'objective knowledge' (which is itself simply this belief in the division of reality) is valued as *being* 'reality'. This division of the self is learnt bodily throughout childhood, for example through the socially structured experience of time and space involved in the disciplining forms of Western education. It is maintained through the twin strategies of alternately positing: an absolute opposition between the two realms (cf. Descartes), or a gradual development process whereby the devalued realm appears to have the possibility of achieving valued status (cf. Darwin, Levy-Bruhl). An example of the former strategy is the absolute opposition often made between humans and other species; an example of the latter is Piaget's interpretation of the child's development from 'irrational' child's play to the adult's 'logical competence', and his seeing this (following Levy-Bruhl 1923) as an evolutionary process which mirrors the process whereby the thinking of so-called 'primitive' man gave way to the sophisticated rationality and science of modern man (James and Prout 1990: 11). An example of the strategy of switching between the two modes is the way in which the authorities in the Belgian Congo justified colonisation on the grounds that they were civilising the 'natives', leading them from 'primitive' childhood to 'civilised' adulthood; while at the same time they created laws forbidding African education and movement, and enforced an absolute opposition between the 'natives' and the colonisers (Chapter 3).

Recognition of the dominance of this Western world view - which underpins both conservation (Chapters 11 and 12) and the interpretation of human-environmental relations evident in anthropological writing (Chapters 7 and 13) - tends to result in either a political 'conspiracy theory' (e.g. Wilmsen 1989, Wolf 1982) or a postmodernist abdication of the possibility of speaking truth (e.g. Baudrillard 1983, cited in Best & Kellner 1991). Neither response gets beneath the perpetually recreated division between subjectivity and objectivity. This is evident when Wolf, for example, writes that: "Control of communications allows the managers of ideology to lay down the categories through which reality is to be perceived" (1990: 388).

Wolf sees this world view as being objectively imposed by 'managers of ideology', as being the result of power politics, rather than recognising it as an outcome of deeply engrained cultural learning which causes *all* those involved to continuously recreate this view of reality[4]. Commenting on this 'engraining' process, Foucault writes that the mechanics of power "seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their

4 This latter approach represents the world view of social movements which formerly concerned themselves with fighting and even overthrowing the state, and which now see the reform of people's perceptions as the locus of struggle (see for example Harries-Jones 1993).

bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people" (quoted in Morris 1991: 439-440). The denial of subjectivity (grounded in the experience of relationship), and the assertion of the truth value of objectivity, is often expressed in terms of the ascendancy of the mind over the body. One of Descartes' critics, A.J. Krailsheimer, is quoted as saying that:

> The *Cogito* is achieved at the price not only of severing all the traditional bounds by which man has been joined to other men and the world around them, but also of splitting in two the personal union of mind and body and expelling the instincts of the latter (in Lienhardt 1985: 152).

Recent developments in anthropology (Chapter 7) and other related disciplines (Chapter 13), however, recognise that the bodily self is not only the place where alienation is engrained, but also the place where the primacy of relationship, and the unity of body and mind, consciousness and matter, subjectivity and reality, is experienced. This is as true of the 'natural' sciences as it is of the 'social' sciences, and Willis comments that Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle:

> recognised that the absolute Cartesian division between observer and observed, between mind and nature, could no longer be maintained; that human beings were themselves part of nature; and that nature at the most elementary level, that of the atomic particle, was possessed of a kind of consciousness (Willis 1994: xxvii).

If objectivity involves seeking to possess the world through knowledge, by turning relationships into facts, then relinquishing the claim to objectivity means *no longer standing outside relationship and turning that to which you are relating into an object.* Acknowledging the primacy of relationship, and the impossibility of objectivity, does not mean we cannot attempt to understand others, rather it is the very condition for understanding itself (Carrithers 1992: 11).

The importance of recognising oneself as part of the situation one is attempting to understand became evident during my previous research into the causes and consequences of deforestation in Central Africa. Conservationists, however, often appeared to take as their starting point the notion that they were intervening in natural and social systems, as if from outside: failing to recognise how closely conservation is allied to, and can become a part of, the very forces which are destroying the forest. Clearly the assumption of objectivity - of it being possible to stand outside the relations one is attempting to understand - can ultimately prevent rather than enable understanding.

POWER RELATIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In Africa both deforestation and conservation often involve external control being imposed by Western interests on local rights and resources (Adams 1992, Richards 1993, Pimbert

& Pretty 1995). Conservation can simply add a new layer to the imposition of external control which is itself the main cause of deforestation: directly through the economic impact of Western demands, and indirectly through destroying the possibility of sustainable interaction between local people and their environment. Thus, rather than dictating policy to Africa, conservation could work to defuse the systematic way in which the West continues to support people in power, only if they are willing to aid the process of wealth extraction.

I first visited Zaire to investigate the impact of a German multinational logging company, Danzer Siforzal, on the people and forest in its one million hectare concession called 'K9', to the west of the Ituri Forest[5]. The company had made a television documentary to demonstrate its sustainable forestry practise and social concern. However, the *reality* - of forest devastation, cultural dislocation and economic hardship - was very different (Kenrick 1991, 1992a). The concession acted as a magnet drawing people into the forest, who then found the meagre wages too low to survive on, and so turned to shifting cultivation in the areas partially cleared by the logging. At the end of the concession's life the school and pharmacy would disappear with the company to another part of the country. Social and ecological sustainability were concepts which the German directors in Kinshasa may have believed were happening, but their Zairian workers (and their French and Italian managers) on the ground knew otherwise. Meanwhile the company paid less than $10,000 in tax for exports worth $16 million a year (Grantham 1990).

These were stark realities, but they did not appear to implicate me. Returning upriver from the logging concession - on the chaotically overcrowded riverboat which plies its way between Kinshasa and Kisangani - I discussed the politics of Zaire with students returning to their university at Kisangani, and found the finger pointing not at multinationals but at environmental activists like myself. As we perched among the dazzling chaos of people and animals, trade goods and possessions, packed onto one of the many barges being pushed by a single old steamer up the Zaire River; one of the students angrily asked me: "Why do you Europeans come and tell us we mustn't cut down our forests, when you destroyed yours long ago? And look how rich you are now."

As he spoke, yet another group of pirogues swept alongside on the current, people paddling furiously as one person jumped or threw a rope or vine from their canoe to tie up, trade and socialise with those on board this peoples riverboat. These pirogues would later return - laden with goods and often with returning passengers - to the villages and the towns along the rivers edge from which trade networks spread out through the deceptively

5 As a researcher for the Institute for Ecology and Action Anthropology, Monchengladbach.

anonymous forest. There is far more life along the riverside and throughout the forest than simply the timber that Siforzal is cutting.

From Zaire I headed west to investigate the impact of a new road being built in the Central African Republic (CAR). After pressure from environmentalists, European funding bodies such as the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) withdrew funding since it judged that the road might have adverse environmental consequences: opening up the forest to intensive exploitation by locals and nationals for timber and for coffee plantations; and running close to a recently created World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) national park. Several African countries, angered by this withdrawal of funds - and echoing the student's angry question - asked: "Why should Europeans stop African development for environmental reasons?" Thus, once again, African development needs and European environmental needs were seen as being in opposition. However, the pressure to construct this road had come from the multi-national logging companies operating in CAR. While providing short-term low-paid employment to people who mostly came from outside the local area, and while providing lucrative financial benefit to those in power, the companies would - judging from past experience (e.g. Colchester 1993) - ultimately leave the region much worse off: both environmentally and socially. If the option is between Western run national parks which seek to control and exclude local people, and economic developments which ultimately only benefit Western companies, then the situation appears hopeless. But this is perhaps because we are asking the wrong question. Looking at the situation; WWF, the ODA, and other concerned Western bodies, tend to ask "what shall we do?" But the question that needs to be asked is "what are we already doing?"; how can we remove extractive and controlling Western interests, and allow the long-term relationship between local communities and their environment to be the starting point for conservation and development.

ZAIRE: POWER AND PASSIVITY

Relations with the 'environment' - expressed through ritual exchange or conservation restrictions - are simply one aspect of social relations, whether those social relations are seen as including all aspects of the world, or as involving an opposition between an active human social world acting on an essentially passive 'nature' (Ingold 1994). In the West this latter paradigm of control - of power and passivity - has shaped not only the conservation process, but also the analysis of political power itself. The historian Basil Davidson began his description of Zaire with the following picture:

> Anyone who has floated for days along the current of Zaire's majestic rivers, . . and who for countless hours has watched those *anonymous forests* slide past in *silence and*

> *solitude* as though *rooted in eternity,* will know that every pretence of power or politics can seem, in these latitudes, to be a very distant legend. . . . The steamer checks its dilatory pace once a day or sometimes more, and halts at small log quaysides, each with its handful of humanity. But these are figures in *a brooding void.* (1992: 254)

This picture of the Zaire beyond the urban reach as being passive and stagnant - "figures in a brooding void" - is misleading as a representation of Zairian reality, but fascinating for what it says about the Western paradigm through which we attempt to make sense of what is happening in places like Zaire. Davidson's damning picture of a crumbling Zaire is one in which the state has ceased to exist, except as a means whereby Mobutu's kinship network can extract wealth and provoke ethnic clashes, manoeuvring and dividing the opposition in order to maintain its extractive kleptocracy in power. A kleptocracy originally established and maintained by the West to secure easy access to Zaire's resources, and a continuation of the days when King Leopold of Belgium's representatives insisted his soldiers in the then Belgian Congo returned with their victims chopped off hands to account for every bullet used. In Davidson's picture the hopes for democracy have been confounded and the 230 political parties, thrown up by the attempt to move towards some form of democracy, are simply kinship corporations themselves (1992: 227).

The flicker of hope he allows himself concerns Janet MacGaffey's (1986) work on the emergence of a new middle class that is the product of illegal trade, and which instead of appropriating wealth in the manner of the state, reinvests its profits into expanding and managing its trade networks and businesses. For Davidson then, the flicker of hope lies in the creation of "a capital-owning bourgeoisie as the decisive factor in establishing a capitalist *system*, where none otherwise exists or has ever existed . . ." (1992: 261) MacGaffey's work mainly concerned the Nande, who play a vital role in maintaining trade networks throughout north east Zaire. However, is this an example of incipient Western capitalism or of indigenous African trade networks? If it is the former it may simply be another version of those who, in Africa and Europe, benefit in the short term from the dismantling of the state. Those who Davidson describes as "the distinguished exponents of the "wealth at all costs" philosophy of Europe in the 1980s" (1992: 260); the costs - he points out - being always born by others. For Davidson these illegal Nande traders are emergent capitalists with positive or negative possibilities.

Although his political analysis of the state as a corrupt legacy of colonialism, kept minimally alive through Western backing, is very helpful; it fails to allow for the creative tradition of trade and exchange which may well be the model these Nande are building upon; just as his earlier picture of the "figures in a brooding void" beside the Zaire River

takes no account of the networks of peoples throughout the sound filled forests he describes as "anonymous" and "silent". It is this picture of the ordinary people and their environment as being passive and isolated that I would take as the key to our misrepresentation of Central Africa, a misrepresentation which paralyses any creative response to political and environmental issues there.

In *Paths in the Rainforest* Jan Vansina counteracts this image of passivity. He paints a vivid picture of the pre-colonial dynamic political tradition that existed throughout the peoples of the Central African forests. One which consisted not of isolated distinct ethnicities gradually being forced into contact through the expansion of African and Western empires, but one where the fluid movement of people, goods, language and ideology over great distances was the norm. According to Vansina: far from causing isolated traditional passive cultures to join the broad sweep of historical interaction and change, the imposition of Western colonialism froze or disrupted the diverse dynamic nature of the Central African political and cultural tradition (Vansina 1990).

Davidson sums up the Zairian state's attitude to those beyond its reach:

> So long as mining wealth could be sold for food imported to feed the Mobutist state - the bureaucracy and its clients, the towns, a few essential services, an army for internal use and a copious force of police - there could be no profit in helping peasants. . . [Meanwhile the] forests and savannahs outside that state might *fester* in their *brooding solitudes*. (1992: 258, emphasis added)

This image of powerless passivity beyond the bounds of the state replicates a widespread Western understanding of power and of powerlessness which echoes Descarte's division between mind and matter. Carol MacCormack summarises this understanding when she describes Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of the historical relationship between Europe and the so-called Third World. Lévi-Strauss reasons that:

> societies are not 'underdeveloped' through their own doing but because capitalistic societies have extracted wealth from them since the sixteenth century. . . .The relationship between colonialist and colonialized, and the relationship between capitalist and proletarian in industrial societies, are manifestations of the same process. . . . For Lévi-Strauss, the creation and very reality of industrial society is found in the irreversible historical conditions of oppression, and he criticises Malinowski for considering development to result from the impact of a higher and more active culture on a simpler and more passive one. "'Simplicity' and 'passivity' are not intrinsic properties of these societies, but the result of the development's action upon them from the very beginnings; a situation created by brutality, pillage and violence . . ." (Lévi-Strauss 1977: 316) (MacCormack 1980: 19-20).

In MacCormack's text the key image is of passivity. Malinowski seeing intrinsic passivity in the colonialised. Lévi-Strauss seeing passivity in the working class or so-called 'underdeveloped' cultures as being the result of capitalist development making them

passive to serve its ends. And MacCormack goes on to argue that women's passivity is also the result of oppression, and criticises Lévi-Strauss for seeing passivity in females as being intrinsic. Within this paradigm of the powerful and active as superior to, or oppressive of, the powerless and passive; the only options are to benefit from, or object to, this passivity and oppression.

In Richard Lee's analysis this paradigm's most recent and powerful expression is in a form of postmodernism which - in his view - began as a movement attempting to deconstruct systems of persuasive power and ended up seeing everything - every text and encounter - as lacking in any ultimate truth value. Lee sums up this perspective in a simple phrase: "nothing is real . . . except power" (1992: 37). According to Lee, in this version: every person and culture is like a passive object waiting to be moulded into meanings and uses by the one thing that is real by virtue of its over-arching power: the system of thought and exploitation that constitutes late capitalism. This perspective appears to assert that, cut off from any authentic way of experiencing reality - and in a culture Richard Lee describes as devoted to the construction and selling of political, commercial and lifestyle fantasy as if it was real - such a detached cynicism is perhaps the most we can hope to muster: a cynicism which can demolish but cannot create, nor even acknowledge authentic creativity.

Davidson's analysis, of the passivity outwith the destructive state system in Zaire, can be placed in the larger tradition, of which this form of postmodernism is a recent expression. It is an analysis which also permeates the conservation world, leading to strategies of control and enforcement which reflect the paralysis of our paradigm rather than the diverse and dynamic social realities on the ground. Realities which continue alongside and beyond the oppression Davidson so persuasively describes. The contrast between the "brooding silence" surrounding Davidson's riverboat, and the networks of people and goods pulsating through the forest and the peoples riverboat that I was travelling on earlier in this introduction, may simply be the contrast between this paradigm of power and passivity, and the reality of networks of social relations. It may also reflect the different power relations embodied in these different experiences of the world. A difference illustrated by the contrast between travelling on the peoples riverboat, and the Zaire River's luxury boat I once had the misfortune to travel on. The luxury boat was captained by a relation of Mobutu, ran aground daily on the sand banks, carried the wealthy, disdained trade and villages, and was largely ignored by the thousand pirogues who greeted the peoples riverboat. It was a perfect example of power inadvertently creating for itself the illusion of being surrounded by a powerless and passive world.

The question the Zairian student asked me on the crowded peoples riverboat was clearly appropriate from his perspective: "why do you Europeans come and tell us we mustn't cut down our forests, when you destroyed yours long ago - and look how rich you are now?". But from my perspective the question needs to be turned on its head: "how can we in the West stop enriching ourselves through destroying and controlling other peoples 'social' and 'physical' environments to the degree that we have already destroyed our own?" Perhaps the answer to this question has as much to do with our understanding of fundamental human needs and 'human nature' as it has to do with questions of 'power' which we tend to place in that domain we circumscribe within the category of 'politics' (Weiner 1976: 229).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The Question of Sustainability

Since the threat to sustainable Mbuti, farmer, forest relations in the Ituri comes from people who would appear to be victims of external forces in their own regions outside the Ituri, Wilmsens' argument in relation to the !Kung, that the system we call capitalism shapes even societies which we had thought possessed an integrity beyond the systems reach (e.g. Wilmsen & Denbow 1990), would appear to hold a lot of truth in the Ituri, both historically and in the present day. As economic opportunities are eroded, and the infrastructure of education and administration close down, the gold carriers proliferate. Their demand for bushmeat from the Mbuti, and for garden produce from the Bila, and their creation of large shambas, further strengthens the argument that it is inescapable external forces which are determining economic and social activity in the Ituri.

In this situation can one distinguish indigenous local needs from external extractive forces? Paul Richards (1993) writing about the diverse inhabitants of the forest edge in Sierra Leone, suggests that the term 'indigenous' is misleading since the presence of outsiders in that area has a long history, and such cultural diversity is as deserving of conservation as the biological diversity of the forest. Certainly those setting up Forest Reserves tend to be primarily concerned with rainforest species, and tend to think of the human inhabitants as a threat, rather than as an integral part of the forest. However, there is a midpoint between Paul Richards' view and that of the biologists. Interaction which is sustainable, which is inclusive, can be understood as an integral part of its environment; whilst extractive activity, with no reference to the long-term relationship between different local peoples and their environment, is likely to be simply an aspect of Wilmsen's late capitalist system expressing not a local need but an abusive power system.

Historically the implication of Wilmsen's "system as all powerful" argument is that societies such as the Mbuti and the Bila are largely an outcome of the impact of capitalism and that therefore there are no values which can be the basis for sustainability[6]. It may appear paradoxical that, while profoundly disagreeing with such a pessimistic analysis, this thesis begins with an analysis of the nature of the immense impact of the West on these societies in Zaire: both through colonialism and capitalism, and through our understanding of such societies.

Chapter Contents

Chapter 2 takes as its starting point the largely unacknowledged impact of colonialism both on Mbuti-Bila relations and on Turnbull's writing about them. Chapter 3 establishes the broader historical and political context of deforestation and other pressures on the Ituri; while Chapter 4 looks at the dynamics involved in immigration, deforestation and gold extraction, and at the impact of these external forces on a small Mbuti camp on the edge of the Ituri Forest; and compares this with the severe impact of deforestation on the Baka of Cameroun. Chapters 5 to 10 are the heart of the thesis, and concentrate on the nature of Mbuti-Bila relations with each other, with the forest and with external forces in my main research site in the centre of the Ituri. Chapter 11 and 12 assess the ideological and practical conflicts between conservationists and local people; and, in discussing the likely impact of proposed conservation measures, look at the implications of this research for conservation in the Ituri. Finally Chapter 13 (continuing the emphasis on theoretical implications evident in Chapter 7) looks at the implications for anthropology, and in particular for hunter-gatherer studies and our approach to human-environmental relations.

The Researchers Presence in the Field and in the Text

It is clear from any number of studies of the work of earlier anthropologists, (and it is clear in the following chapter in reference to Colin Turnbull in particular), that our political positions and personal responses shape the narrative we tell and the analysis we make. To be explicit about our political position and personal responses is to be more honest with the material than to deny them in the name of scientific disinterest, "for in [scientific] disinterest power and desire are suppressed but no less effective" (Crapanzano 1995: 421).

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6 'Sustainability' is a term with no direct equivalence in KiMbuti or KiBila, the closest approximation is the expression *wedemisa tu. Wedemisa* means 'to make fertile', and is used when, for example, an Mbuti makes an offering to the ancestors of meat (preferably liver, the seat of feeling, which is also easy to eat for the old, including the ancestors). This is to ensure that the ancestors bless the forest and make it fertile (i.e. full of meat). *Tu*, from the Swahili, adds the intensifier, or 'simplifier': 'just, only' - and in this context is a way of saying 'may it be so always'. Just as the Western term 'sustainability' - in implying a 'scientifically measurable reality' - draws on our cosmology; so the Mbuti expression *wedemisa tu* draws on their cosmology - and ultimately on their sense that they themselves and 'the forest and the ancestors are one'.

Being explicit about one's responses does not require providing an autobiography against which ones writing can be made to make sense (Cohen 1992: 223). For example, in examining Turnbull's work I will not be exploring the possibility that his portrayal of the Mbuti follows on from his early spiritual experience in an Indian ashram, a theme repeated in his writings about the Mbuti after he became a Buddhist monk towards the end of his life (1993: 23-26). This is not because information such as this could not be anthropologically meaningful, for after all good 'gossip' is valued more highly than questionnaires in most anthropological research. Rather it is *because* such personal information always carries social significance that it is not a final resting place, it is simply another refraction of the social reality in which a person has lived. As such, the example given would be useful information if used to point to changing spiritual beliefs in the West and to how these affect our understanding of people such as the Mbuti. But it is the refraction of Turnbull's time evident in his eagerness to make such a clear cut opposition between the Mbuti and the Bila that is, as we shall see in the following chapter, more pertinent to our understanding of the way his ethnography was embedded in the colonial period, just as mine is embedded in a period in which people in the 'West' carry an acute awareness both of environmental crisis, and of our inability to understand and respond to this crisis.

CHAPTER 2 THE POLITICS OF ANTHROPOLOGY: The Colonial & Post-Colonial Context of Ethnography

This chapter focuses on the impact of colonialism on Mbuti-Bila relations and on Colin Turnbull's writing about them. His analysis is placed in the context of other anthropological research in the Ituri, and his depiction of Mbuti-Bila relations as being essentially one of opposition is shown to reflect the nature of colonial control rather than being essential to Mbuti or Bila identity.

The colonial imagination is recognised as having shaped ethnography as much as it shaped the societies ethnographers studied. Examining the Kalahari Debate's relevance to the Ituri highlights the question of how societies and individuals retain authorship of their identity, and how they relinquish it to external authority.

PREVIOUS ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE ITURI

The Mbuti ('Pygmies') continue to play an important part in many debates about human nature and the nature of culture (Abruzzi on cultural materialism 1980; Collier & Rosaldo on gender 1981; Carrithers on change 1992; Cohen on community 1985, and the self 1994). In earlier debates they were often seen as representing the earlier or inner nature of humanity. This is evident in looking at the writing of the diffusionists such as Father Wilhelm Schmidt, who sought to argue that religion has always been central to human existence, and that the idea of God is derived from the Pygmies, who were themselves the original cultural circle (1929: 291-301). In arguing this, people such as Father Paul Schebesta were reacting against the biologists assertion that primitive man had no religion. In the preface to Schebesta's *Among Congo Pigmies,* Gerald Griffin stated that "previous explorers" maintained that "they had discovered a race that had no religion and no conception of the soul as a separate entity from the body", and so:

> fastened on this pseudo-discovery as bearing out their contention that primitive man had no religion. Dr Schebesta . . . shows how these little African gypsies, who. . . are the nearest approach in primitiveness to the wild animals on which they prey, have a definite religious cult and ethical social codes of their own (1933: 5).

Schebesta himself later goes on to say that although: "the Christian onlooker gets the impression that the Bambuti are actually a race devoid of any religious cult. This impression [is] an utterly fallacious one" based on "the lack of external demonstrations in the Bambuti religion" (1933: 162). His image of the Mbuti as possessing true religion,

totally unlike the "superstitious belief in witchcraft and magic which they have picked up from the negroes" (1933: 162), is an image which is consistently and powerfully reworked by Turnbull who sharply differentiates between the Mbuti's pure experience of their sacred forest and the villagers superstitious ancestor worship and fear of the forest (Turnbull 1961, 1963a, 1965, 1968, 1983, 1990, 1993). However Turnbull objects to Schebesta's portrayal of the Mbuti as being subservient to the villagers as conveyed in passages such as this:

> It is difficult to imagine how the pigmies lived before the negroes invaded the tropical forest, and I doubt . . . [whether they now] could survive without the aid of the negro plantations. . . .The negro has exploited this very natural desire of the pigmies for nourishing diet, and has constituted himself their overlord. . . (Schebesta 1933: 41).

In Turnbull's view: the Mbuti only *appeared* to be subservient in order to cheat the stupid villagers out of village produce, and could subsist perfectly happily in their forest world. Turnbull's description of their peaceful forest world is anticipated by Schebesta who writes: "they are the happiest people on the earth. If they have sufficient food for the day, they do not worry about the morrow, and they live in perfect contentment and security, isolated from the big world in the small cosmos of their clan . . ."(Schebesta 1933: 281). While happy to emphasise this aspect of Mbuti life, there is another aspect of Schebesta's experience which tends to be absent from Turnbull's descriptions:

> the explosive, quarrelsome disposition of the pigmies got on my nerves after a time. . . The instant they are up against any difficulty they fly into a passion. . [But] they are merely giving free vent to unrestrained primitive animalism (Schebesta 1933: 95).

For Turnbull, however, the Mbuti lead happy lives in their sacred forest, free from harassment by others and from the *need* for village produce. The research of Bob Bailey and the Harvard Ituri Project with the Efe Pygmies does not tend to deal with the issues of divinity and happiness (although see Zalduondo 1989 on happiness). Bailey and DeVore make clear that their reason for choosing to study the Efe in the north eastern Ituri Forest, rather than Pygmy groups elsewhere, was because of their relative isolation (1989). There the "Efe and Lese are living and subsisting with fewer extraneous forces than most other people in the Ituri or elsewhere in Central Africa" (1989: 462). If this harks back to the idea of the Pygmies as somehow less contaminated by the wider world than other people, then Ichikawa in his ecological studies of Mbuti subsistence goes further 'back' than that by locating the Mbuti in the context of studying primates living in groups (1986).

Other recent studies, for example, Hart & Hart (1986) and Peterson (1989, 1991, 1992), increasingly focus on Mbuti interaction with their environment, and their social relations

with their neighbours, in an attempt to inform those making decisions about conservation policy in the area. My work clearly falls into this last category.

QUESTIONING *WAYWARD SERVANTS* : TURNBULL AND THE MBUTI

In *Wayward Servants* Turnbull described his research as an attempt to understand "the true nature of the over-all Mbuti/Villager relationship . . . following up on the suggestion made earlier that this relationship was not one of master/servant, still less of slavery, and probably not even of symbiosis" (1965: 5). His desire to counteract the then prevalent view of the Mbuti as dependant servants led him to interpret his own material in such a way as to maximise the impression of an opposition between the fearful village and the respectful forest worlds: one in which wily Mbuti outwit their supposed masters.

Turnbull dwells on the advantages of Mbuti life over Bila life, and makes an absolute opposition between their cosmologies. The following passage makes clear that to him the contrast between villagers' fear of - and Mbuti respect for - the forest, has nothing to do with historical circumstance and everything to do with the essential nature of these two cultures:

> instead of acceding to the natural, the villagers with their superior technology combat it; and instead of respecting the supernatural in the sense that the Mbuti respect it, the villagers oppose it with fear, mistrust and occasional hate. They people the forest with evil spirits, and they fill their lives with magic, witchcraft and a belief in sorcery. The forest achieves the establishment of two virtually irreconcilable systems of values. (1965: 21).

Turnbull's' research, however, coincided with the most effective period of Belgian colonial domination which treated the villagers and the Mbuti very differently. The Mbuti were allowed to move through the forest freely, while the Bila were forced to move their villages to the roadside and to pay taxes in the form of maintaining the roads, feeding immigrant labourers, and growing cotton to pay as a form of tax. "These demands thus increased the amount of plantation work that had to be undertaken by each village, and at the same time reduced the labour force available" (Turnbull 1965: 39). Thus what Turnbull describes as the two culturally distinct and opposing spheres - the village and the forest - turns out to be a division into two spheres by virtue of colonial enforcement. Likewise the "desperate attempt of the villagers to assert authority over the Mbuti" (1965: 8) resulted from their need for Mbuti labour and, perhaps, the need to exert domination as a way of counteracting their sense of powerlessness in relation to the Belgian authorities.

On the one hand Turnbull describes the impact of colonialism in the following way: "the colonial era had relatively little impact on the village farmers, and virtually none on the Mbuti" (1983: 28). This is the general tone he adopts; for example in his chapter on 'The Forest World' in 1983. Yet as soon as he is out of the forest and writing about 'The Village World' he writes of the devastating impact of Belgian laws and taxation, without grasping that this context was not simply affecting the Bila (and the Mbuti when they were at the road) but was profoundly distorting both groups beliefs concerning the forest, and shaping Mbuti experience of the forest world itself. He describe the way in which, while the Mbuti were not even being taxed, the fact that the Bila were forced to grow cotton introduced a fundamental change into their relationship, since the Bila could not meet the tax demands without Mbuti labour:

> Until then [their relationship] had been one of mutual convenience. . . . But now that the villagers had a very real need for Mbuti labour . . . the relationship took on a hierarchical aspect it did not have before. And the more the Mbuti . . . resisted the increasing demands on their services as labourers, the more the villagers sought to establish and confirm their superordination (1983: 60).

The reason for this hierarchical relationship - in which the villagers were desperate to control the Mbuti through supernatural means; the Mbuti were the free agents; and the villagers perceived malevolent forces all round them - does not have its source in the opposing cosmologies Turnbull claims for each group but in the differing means available to each group in their attempts to cope with colonial domination. Where Turnbull writes that the villagers feared the forest and refused to enter it, his ethnography is full of villagers entering the forest, and he omits to say that the colonial authorities forbade farmers from wasting their agriculturally productive time by entering the forest. His emphasis is always on the foolishness of the villagers who fear the forest and think they can control the Mbuti. However this 'foolishness' - to the extent that it existed at all - is not an innate disposition but the transient historical consequence of being caught in a relatively powerless position. For example, in the following sentence Turnbull misleadingly attaches the word 'disturbing' to the Bila themselves, as if they were the cause of their sense of being surrounded by a hostile world:

> . . .the villagers believed, with a disturbing intensity, in the existence of supernatural forces all around them, some of which were hostile (those associated with the forest) and some of which were friendly (ancestral spirits). (1983: 61)

In fact, the Bila *were* surrounded by a disturbing hostile world - not the forest but the colonial powers. The Mbuti *were* free to go where they wished - not because of innate fearlessness and trust but because the Belgians chose not to restrict them in the way they restricted the villagers. The villagers were powerless to resist the Belgians laws, demands and punishments which were creating that hostile world for them, and if indeed they did

universally view the forest as hostile and the Mbuti as people who ought to be controlled, it was as a result of this uniformly oppressive situation. As Eric Wolf has written of other peoples subjected to European expansionism, the Bila "were drawn into larger systems to suffer its impact and become its agents" (1982: 23).

The hierarchical opposition that, Turnbull argues, dominated Mbuti-Bila relations does not reflect the shared diversity of beliefs and practices (including hostility, opposition, co-operation and equality) which persisted despite Belgian authority (as is evident in Turnbull's writing [refs.]) and continues today. Of the many tendencies which characterise Mbuti-Bila relations, the tendency Turnbull saw as being the true nature of their relationship (fruitless attempts at Bila domination, and the maintenance of an outwitting separation on the part of the Mbuti) was the result of a combination of historical circumstance and an anthropologist who was determined to right the mistaken impression of the Mbuti as dominated servants. Interestingly, in the northern Congo the "relationship between the [Bambendjelli] Pygmies . . . and the villagers seem[s] to have changed since 1946. The contempt and mistrust has reportedly gone" (Luling n.d.: 22). It is possible that the relationship of hostility, contempt and mistrust, evident in - and exaggerated by - both colonialism and ethnography written from within a colonial perspective, was reproduced in the relations between farmers and hunter-gatherers throughout Central Africa.

RECENT RESEARCH: REFUTING OR CORROBORATING TURNBULL?

Most anthropological research which questions Turnbull's picture of the Mbuti as being independent of the villagers, has done so in one of two ways. Either by looking at the impact of broader social and economic changes, and arguing that there have been fundamental economic changes since Turnbull's day (Hart 1978, 1986; Peterson 1991, 1992); or through socio-ecological studies demonstrating that the Efe and the Mbuti have always been nutritionally dependent on the agricultural produce of their farming neighbours (e.g. Bailey et all, 1989).

One author who has recently looked at forager/farmer interdependence in the Ituri in cultural rather than purely macro-economic or ecological terms, is Richard Grinker (1990, 1994) who conducted fieldwork with the Lese and the Efe. He takes issue with Turnbull's "representation of the Mbuti and the Bila as distinct groups whose interactions are meaningful primarily in the service of maximising the Mbuti's affluence"(1994: xi); and also with Turnbull's description "of the forest as a bountiful, never changing sanctuary, a place that not only provides everything the Mbuti need or desire but also is a completely

good place, unlike the village, which is completely bad" (1994: 8). He objects to Turnbull's acceptance that the forest and the village are "totally separate and independent spheres of life . . . [an acceptance which] allows him to interpret whatever the Mbuti tell him as simply another detail of that divided social situation (1994: 9).

Thus far, Grinker's reading of Turnbull coincides with my own. However Grinker goes on to accept that for the Mbuti and the Bila there really is such a division into the world of the forest and the world of the village. He does this because in his fieldwork it was clear that such a clear-cut opposition existed between the Efe and the Lese, albeit one in which the two groups are dependent on each other economically and culturally, constituting a whole society in which "the hunter-gatherer/farmer division is a symbolic representation, an ethnic identity framed in terms of the economy"(1994: 11) This follows John Harts view (1979) of the foragers and farmers being mutually dependent:

> Precisely because these groups 'depend' upon one another, I resist Turnbull's reification of the village and the forest, indeed of the foragers and the farmers. The essentialist definition of these domains threatens to prohibit us from seeing them as mutually constitutive. (Grinker 1994: 9)

However Grinker makes this division between foragers and farmers the central feature of his understanding, not only of the Lese and the Efe, but also of the Mbuti and Bila. He agrees "completely with Turnbull that this pervasive and ever-present opposition between the village and the forest is one of the most fundamental components of the culture and society of these [Mbuti and Bila] foragers and farmers, as well as for the Lese and Efe"(ibid.). Grinker's understanding differs from Turnbull's in that Grinker sees the forest-village opposition as an ethnic division in which the Mbuti define themselves in terms of the Bila: an opposition that reflects the fact that the two groups constitute a single society, rather than reflecting their separateness and autonomy. While accepting, on the basis of Grinker's rich fieldwork, that such an interpretation is central to understanding Efe/Lese relations, I reject its centrality to Mbuti/Bila relations.

One of the central factors enabling Turnbull to construct his Village/Forest, Bila/Mbuti, opposition, is the Bila's supposed fear of the forest and the fact that the forest is supposed to be the Mbuti's world. Similarly a central finding in Grinker's research is that the Lese are equally fearful of the forest:

> The forest is the place where the hostile ancestral spirits of the Lese dwell . . . The construction of ethnic boundaries goes hand in hand with the construction of inequality, in which the village is made to represent everything good, while the forest represents everything bad. This division of the world is echoed by Bahuchet and Guilaume in their account of Aka-Bantu relations, as well as by E. Wæhle (1985: 392), who writes [of Lese beliefs] : 'The Efe are savages and sub-humans (likened to chimpanzees or forest hogs); they are thieves; the forest is the contradiction to the

> village (almost as nature to culture).' The two worlds are diametrically opposed. . . (1994: 76).

To disagree with Turnbull's central analysis might be considered a mistake, but to appear to disagree with such an array of specialists could well be considered careless. However, I am not arguing that Mbuti and Bila do not sometimes talk about each other in this way, I am arguing that such an opposition and division is only *one among many* ways in which individuals of both groups relate to each other, to the forest and to the village.

Where Grinker describes how at night Lese will tell frightening tales of the forest, and that "the stories were directed towards the children and even intended to frighten them"(1994: 73); this fear and hatred of the forest - so central to both Turnbull's and Grinker's analysis - exists in my study area at the periphery of *both* Mbuti and Bila experience. The degree to which both Mbuti and Bila experience fear in the village and in the forest is expressed primarily in terms of sorcery. The degree to which Mbuti and Bila share a sense of belonging to the village and the forest is expressed in terms of their shared forest/ancestor beliefs which involve respect for their ancestors who inhabit, and are, the forest. Mbuti or Bila denigration of, or opposition to, the other group is used as a tactic, rather than indicating that their identity is dependent on opposition to the other group. The situation in the Ituri would appear to more closely resemble Barry Hewlett's description of the relationship between the world of the village and that of the forest for the Aka and their farming neighbours in the Central African Republic. Hewlett says that there the

> "intense dichotomy between the two worlds does not occur due to the fact that on various occasions villagers temporarily leave their plantations to live deep in the forest. They do not fear the forest, and actually know the forest quite well. Villagers go into the forest to trade with Aka, to hunt, or to gather forest foods . . ." (Hewlett 1977: 80).

The sheer isolation of Lese villages from other Lese villages and their associated Efe seems to be in total variance to Hewlett's description of the Aka and their farming neighbours, and to my experience of Bila and Mbuti moving between different villages and between different camps. John Hart recounted how Efe only 30 kilometres south of where Bob Bailey had been working had never heard of him (Hart pers. com.); whereas many of the Mbuti at Utama in the Central Ituri have relatives 35 kilometres away near Epulu and know much of what is happening there. Interestingly, isolation from, and opposition to, the wider world is as evident among the Lese and Efe as is their opposition between the village and forest world. By contrast, there is much more movement - for the Bila and the Mbuti - not simply between the forest and the village, but also between different distant camps, villages and opportunities to 'benefit' from the presence of missions, anthropologists, or conservation initiatives.

In Turnbull's view, Mbuti identity was positively constituted by reverence for the forest, and only negatively by opposition to everything the village represented. Grinker, in extrapolating from his work with the Efe and Lese, sees this opposition between the Mbuti and the Bila as even more central since, rather than both groups sense of identity being constituted by identification with the village or forest, it is the opposition *itself* which provides the core of their identity: "these groups depend upon one another for [and here he quotes Geertz] 'whatever distinctive pattern of organisation of their own they may have'" (Grinker 1994: 9).

While usefully highlighting the central importance of the relationship between the Bila and the Mbuti - in contrast to Turnbull's emphasis on separation and opposition - Grinker is mistaken in extrapolating from his Lese-Efe research to characterise Mbuti-Bila relations as fundamentally one of inequality and denigration. That is simply one turn the relationship can take. Grinker states that in choosing to conduct his research with the Lese he was unable to enter fully into the Efe worldview. This is evident in, for example, his use of quotes from Turnbull when he wishes to summarise Efe attitudes to living in the village. He says (1994: 78) that "the Efe would surely agree with Turnbull's characterisation" of the villages as hot, dusty or muddy, as full of flies and mosquitoes; he continues, quoting Turnbull, "these disease bearers are seldom or ever seen in the depths of the forest (1965: 18)" which is cool and fresh. My own experience of hunting camps is that they can be cool and hospitable, or hot and full of flies and mosquitoes; the village can be similarly inhospitable, although beneath the midday sun the tele (meeting place) in the village can be a more comfortable and cooler place to be than being in a hunting camp that lacks such a sheltered meeting place. I mention this simply to counteract the impression in both Grinker's and Turnbull's work that the complex relations between Bila and Mbuti might be able to be reduced to some essentialist, or in this instance 'ecological', fundamental of opposition. The opposition between Bila and Mbuti is simply one strand in a matrix of relationships in which group solidarity, or division and opposition, may be expressed along gender or other lines: divisions or alliances which can have nothing to do with being Mbuti or Bila. Thus in part this thesis is an attempt to correct the essentialising tendency in Turnbull's understanding of the Mbuti and the Bila, and to recognise both approaches to relationship - one of trust, and one of being dominated by a preoccupation with domination - as being open to both peoples.

INVISIBLE COLONIALISM IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL WRITING

> The conditions of dominion - imperial, colonial, economic, or material - that made anthropology possible in the first place, still obtain. However sensitive we may be to these conditions . . . we cannot repudiate the state of affairs that allows us access to their lives in a way that they do not have access to ours (Campbell 1989: 176).

Watching Mbuti skilfully extracting wealth from tourists on overland trucks passing through Epulu, jobs from white conservationists, and their observing every detail of my personal and cultural idiosyncrasies throughout the time spent in their hunting camps; it is clear that they may have had far better access to "our lives" than I ever gained to theirs. It is a commonplace observation that those in lesser positions of power tend to have a far better idea of their 'superior's' state of affairs, like the invisible servant knowing his masters foibles, than the reverse. However, although questioning his conclusion, Campbell is surely right to point to the need to acknowledge the conditions of "dominion" under which much ethnography was, and is, carried out.

The tendency to essentialise, to largely ignore the impact of colonial power, is even more evident in Turnbull's writing on the Ik (1972; cf. Knight 1994). Turnbull described them as stripped of their culture by starvation, but their plight was in fact the result of being expelled from their lands which had been turned into a game reserve (Colchester 1994: 13). Laughter at others misfortune - which Turnbull interprets as evidence of their cruelty - was probably a hysterical response to the deepening tragedy (Okely 1975: 175). Turnbull essentialised the behaviour he met as timeless, and so he did nothing about the situation of people for whom his ahistorical essentialist perspective allowed him only revulsion and no sympathy.

Turnbull was certainly not alone in de-emphasising the impact of colonialism on the societies he was studying. Douglas Johnson has found a similar tendency in comparing Evans-Pritchard's work on the Nuer (Evans 1995) with the account of Coriat - a colonial administrator in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan - whose description of the impact of colonial taxation and the administrations championing of tribal divisions, parallels the effect of colonial taxes and policy in the Ituri. Another striking parallel with Turnbull's work was Evans-Pritchard's emphasis on the distinct and oppositional difference between the Dinka and the Nuer, in contrast to this Coriat describes the exceptional fluidity of political identity among the Nuer (Johnson 1993). Thus, whereas the colonial and anthropological imagination sought to classify and separate the colonised into distinct categories, for administrative and ethnographic purposes; these did not reflect the underlying social tendency towards movement and fluidity, both in southern Sudan and in the Ituri Forest.

This attempt to categorise groups sharply and absolutely would seem to reflect both a functionalist delineation of apparently 'closed' societies, and a colonial requirement that those to be ruled be clearly named and categorised (Roosens 1989: 13). There are similar parallels to be found in Nugent's argument with Leach (Nugent 1982, 1983; Leach 1983). Nugent argues that political oscillation in Kachin society was to a large extent the result of colonialism and changes in the opium trade, rather than being the indigenous political system of highland Burma as portrayed by Leach. Nugent's comment on the relationship between his work and that of Leach echoes the relationship between my work and Turnbull's':

> with some major exceptions, virtually all the data I had chosen to use could be found in Leach's work. . . What changes from one analysis to the next is which dimensions of this totality are brought out, and which are made to recede into the background" (Nugent, 1982: 523-524).

The fierce argument between Nugent and Leach over the interpretation of historical records relating to the Kachin (Leach 1954) is repeated more recently in relation to the Kalahari by Wilmsen and Denbow on the one hand, and Lee and Solway on the other (Wilmsen & Denbow 1990, Solway & Lee 1990, Lee 1992). In an argument which has parallels with my assertion that Turnbull de-emphasises the impact of colonialism, Wilmsen argues that Lee (Lee 1972, 1979) and other Kalahari ethnographers have treated the Bushmen as if they were isolated people, when in fact for hundreds of years they have functioned within the broader Southern African social and political processes (1989: 315).

Thus my analysis of the importance of colonialism - both in shaping Turnbull's way of understanding and categorising Mbuti and Bila society, and in shaping the relationship between the Bila and the Mbuti at the time of his research - should be seen as part of a broader attempt to reassess the relationship between anthropologists and the societies they study, and between colonial or state power and the societies they seek to rule.

THE KALAHARI DEBATE'S RELEVANCE: STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

My intention is not to summarise the Kalahari debate, which has been covered extensively both by the main participants and by others (e.g. Barnard 1992b, Kent 1992, Burch 1994), but to use it to shed light on the situation in the Ituri, and to seek a resolution of the important issues it raises within the context of Mbuti studies. While Wilmsen and Denbow state that the inhabitants of the Kalahari have been engaged in broader economic systems for hundreds of years, and that it is access to power and resources which distinguishes different groups in the Kalahari, not 'culture' or 'ethnicity' (1989: 324); Barnard points out

(1992a: 297-298) that "Wilmsen's approach grants the Bushmen history, but it minimises the uniqueness and resilience of their cultures." Grinker goes further when he says that:

> Wilmsen intends to give not only the San but all hunter-gatherers a history, but he ultimately takes it away from them. San history is the history of *other peoples* as they have affected the San through 'contact' (that is, 'domination'). . . [portraying] the San as pitiful victims of dominant political and economic forces, he also perpetuates the idea that hunter-gatherers lack the agency to constitute their own cultures (1992: 165).

Seeing the San as encased in domination (Wilmsen & Denbow 1990: 499) is as one sided as seeing them as encased in a closed culture. Although Wilmsen, like Wolf, is superb at describing the interconnection between different peoples in terms of political and economic domination, Carrithers' comment (1992: 24), that one would not turn to Wolf for an understanding of religion and other areas of social life, also applies to Wilmsen.

The weakness of Lee's response (1990) to Wilmsen's criticism (1990) is that he attempts to refute the criticism in its own terms, by arguing about whether there was the degree of contact between !Kung and traders Wilmsen asserts, rather than resting his case on the very different form of 'engagement' which !Kung have with each other, the environment and other people, however long that contact has persisted. Just as Bird-David (1992b) suggests that Sahlins (1968, 1974) mistakenly prioritised an economic analysis over a cultural one in arguing that hunter- gatherer's are affluent, so Lee concentrates on the absence of contact and domination, rather than accepting the possibility of long-term !Kung interaction with other peoples, and concentrating on the persistence of their different cultural understanding.

Wolf's (1982) argument for including anthropology in history has, like Wilmsen's argument, the danger of ignoring the reality and power of other cultures in themselves. Wolf argues that history must "account for populations specifiable in time and space, both as outcomes of significant processes and as their carriers" (1982: 21). But are the Mbuti or Bila, for example, only *outcomes* and *carriers* of history? If history is defined as *our* (Western) history, then the answer must be 'no', for the Mbuti and Bila also have their own 'space' and identity. Wolf continues ". . . we can no longer think of societies as isolated and self-maintaining systems. Nor can we imagine cultures as integrated totalities . . . There are only cultural sets of practices and ideas" (1982: 22). This point usefully argues against seeing such societies as the Mbuti as isolated until recently; but it is misleading if it is taken to mean that such cultures do not have integrity, are not the centre of their own worlds but are only the 'outcome' of the impact of 'world history'.

Although Lee describes egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies as having a different sort of dynamic to most others, one which severely limits the concentration of wealth and power, and although he quotes Ingold's statement that they experience a "different kind of sociality" (Lee 1992, Ingold 1990a: 130-131), he nevertheless does not go as far as Ingold does in challenging Western assumptions about the universality of the dominant Western experience of relationship. Lee, arguing that hunter-gatherer societies are, or have been, essentially different to our own, summarises the argument against his position in the following way:

> Political economists and post-structuralists . . . argue the extraordinary proposition that the natives are 'Us', . . . that the natives are to all intents like Euro-Americans, because relations of domination and/or merchant capital reached the Arctic or the Ituri Forest or Sarawak long before ethnographers did. . . [and] transformed foragers into people like ourselves, as parts of larger systems with hierarchies, commodities, exploitation, and other inequities and their accompanying social consequences. (1992: 35).

In looking at the issues raised by this debate as it relates to the Ituri, I accept *both* the general basis of Wilmsen's argument *and* the more extreme version of Lee's argument as put forward by Ingold. Such extreme positions cannot be reconciled somewhere in the middle of the current debate, but if one follows each of them to their logical conclusion one finds that they meet at the far end of the circle. In general terms Wilmsen simply echoes a line of argument (e.g. Vansina 1983, 1990; Wolf 1982) which has been steadily gaining ground, and is itself becoming the orthodoxy. This perspective argues that such societies as the Mbuti and the !Kung have long been in interaction with broader economic and social forces, and that these peoples identity is in part created in their interaction with other peoples rather than being the result of their purported isolation. Wilmsen's particular argument that such people as the San are not culturally distinct but exist only as a product of dispossession by more powerful economic and political forces, would - if repeated in the context of the Ituri - be a reversion to Schweinfurth (1874: 146) and Schebesta's (1936: 105) argument that the "Pigmies" have long been dependent on their village masters. Although Turnbull dismissed this argument very effectively, in doing so he played down the degree to which broader political and economic forces, mostly mediated through their interaction with villagers in Turnbulls' day, do affect the Mbuti themselves. In this sense Wilmsens argument has parallels in the Ituri. On the other hand, what I am calling Ingold's extreme version of Lee's argument is also valid in looking at the situation in the Ituri. Ingold (1992a, 1992b), along with Bird-David (1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993), argues that some hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti relate to the environment and not simply to other people in a way which implies a "different kind of sociality".

Wilmsen's and Ingold's separate arguments can both be taken further in that both Mbuti and people in the West can act within the context of the dispossession of the self caused by powerful economic and political forces, and both can act within a matrix of personal relationships of equality both with other people and with other aspects of the environment. Lee and Wilmsen share a fundamental belief that 'Us' refers only to Westerners in the role of the powerful and dispossessing dispossessed. Lee argues that there is an authentically different way of experiencing the world than simply late capitalism, and Wilmsen that all people are enmeshed in the same system of domination as we are. The nature of the 'Us' is unchallenged, the argument is simply over its extent.

Bird-David and Ingold describe a state of sociality common to many hunter-gatherers, and supposedly foreign to 'Us', in which co-operation is not opposed to autonomy and people are not opposed to their environment. This opens the way to an understanding that collapses the opposition between 'them' and 'us': not by collapsing 'them' into the dominant Western understanding of sociality as Wilmsen does, but by acknowledging that our (Mbuti and Western) capacity for belonging is as prevalent as our capacity for enmeshing ourselves in systems of exploitation. That "the natives are to all intents like Euro-Americans" is not an "extraordinary proposition", because we are all capable of becoming enmeshed in "relations of domination" and we are all capable of being 'native', of belonging.

Thus not only does the myth of the *Noble Savage* survive in anthropological theories "as a reflection of the common humanity at the root of all cultures" (Barnard 1994: 251); but there is also a myth of the *Possessing and Possessed Westerner* which survives in anthropological theory as a reflection of the common alienation possible for people from any culture. This latter figure has been central to the social sciences as a whole, as is evident in the work of Durkheim, Marx, Weber and Mauss. Both figures can serve as useful ideal types (as they do, for example, in Sahlins writing on the 'original affluent society') if they enable us to gain a fresh perspective on our engrained assumptions about the nature of desire and the inevitability of being enmeshed in a market economy (or on our engrained assumptions about hunter-gatherers isolation and passivity). Lindstrom's writing on cargoism (1995) is an excellent examination of the myth of the *Possessing and Possessed Westerner,* which can help (Chapter 7) shed light on anthropological understandings of hunter-gatherer economies[7].

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7 The term 'Possessing and possessed Westerner' is clumsy, especially in comparison to the elegance of the 'Noble Savage'. I have not found elegant words which describe a person who is possessed by the desire to possess (and for whom the desire to possess is far more important than any possible possession [Lindstrom 1995: 56]); or which describes a person who is dominated by domination and

As is evident in Lee and Wilmsen's disagreement concerning the impact of capitalism on !Kung society, the reassessment of earlier anthropological writing carries a grave danger of replacing a description of "closed societies" with one which gives far too much weight to intrusive domination. Grinker describes this reassessment as involving:

> reconceptualising the boundaries of what we assumed to be "closed societies," to one extent or another removed from the larger spheres of capitalism, politics, and the world system. Situating our fieldwork within historical context represents a central paradox . . .[since] anthropology is practised not in the world but in the local community, yet the local community exists within the world (1994: 20-21).

To suggest that anthropology is practised in the local community and not in the world sets up a division between the two. In this division the 'world' - which here means the West ("capitalism, politics, and the world system") - is given primacy over the locality. This suggests that our problem is simply methodological - we study the small scale, yet the small scale is shaped by larger forces - whereas the paradox in fact cuts both ways. For however much modernism and post-modernism seek to persuade us otherwise: in important senses the world only exists within the locality, we are not only the carriers but the creators and shapers of cultural belief and social form[8].

Scheper-Hughes writes that "Cultures do not, of course, only generate meaning in the Geertzian sense but produce legitimacy for institutionalised inequality and justification for exploitation and domination" (1995: 417). In writing of her work among the poor in South America and South Africa, she describes them as "[t]he subjects of our writings, whose lives and miseries provide us with our livelihood" (1995: 420). This preoccupation with the pervasiveness of oppression and the power of late capitalism acknowledges no other space in peoples lives either for their creativity, authenticity and relationships; or for the ways these can be used against them. The similarity between Wilmsen and Scheper-Hughes approach lies in the fact that both seem to assert the powerlessness of the people they study in the face of politically dominant groups, and neither allow the possibility that people can shape their lives, and so shape history.

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so is preoccupied with dominating others. Our language tends to focus on people as if they were objects in relation rather than focusing on the relationship as involving a process present within both parties. Thus a person is 'dominated' or is 'dominating', and a term for the process - such as 'dominat(ed)ing Westerner' - would be linguistically and culturally unacceptable. Interestingly, in KiMbuti and KiBila such terms are possible. For example, the reverse of the above preoccupation with domination is expressed as 'imé batoo' meaning both 'I have nothing' and 'I am free' ('imé' means 'I'). See chapter 10.

8 For example, Carrier argues (1992: 205-206) that "a concern with encompassing entities, conceptual or social, inevitably devalues the people being studied . . . entities like 'the self', 'class', or 'gender inequality' exist only as manifested in local settings. And in those Local settings their form and effects will be shaped by their relationships with other local structures and processes."

Clearly groups do exert tremendous power over other groups, but the way that this is exercised can only be understood if it is approached internally rather than externally. Thus although colonial control was often justified by reference to terms such as 'civilisation' - and post-colonial control by reference to 'development' - this is as much to do with attempting to change internal states within people as it is to do with coercing them into specific external acts.

That the colonial enterprise involved an awareness of the need to alter peoples internal experience in order to affect what they did 'out there', is highlighted by a 1912 letter from a Belgian administrator in the Ituri to his District Commissioner. Grinker reproduces the letter in support of his argument that the administration found the Ituri very hard to control:

> This region needs to be worked directly by European traders; they are the only ones who will *create needs among the natives*. But the WaLese are still savages. They have hardly any dealings with us (1994: 42).

The emphasis I have added to Grinker's translation points to Lee's argument that at the heart of late capitalism is the creation of needs, and that this creation of needs was clearly at the heart of the colonial enterprise as well. Analysis of oppression (such as Scheper-Hughes above) often ignore the way oppression is worked through the creation of a sense of dependency, an abdication of power, and an acceptance of a peripheral position of power within a larger system (Bloch 1989).

Grinker suggests that "systems of hierarchy are made up of positively valued ideological constructs", which lead people to "intentionally participate in hierarchies and divisions of labour " (1992: 164). Since power is usually appropriated internally by persuasion rather than taken externally by force: it involves the creation of an internal logic stemming from needs created within the individual as the prerequisite for the acceptance of dependence on an external source of authority. However, in attempting to exploit systems of power one comes to embody them, thus losing ones own power to the dynamics of the system one partakes in. Bloch argues (1992) that ritual is one such process whereby the individual is internally conquered by external authority, and the individuals core sense of identity becomes itself identified with this ability to conquer everyday relationships of reciprocity. A similar, but more general point, is made by Ortner when she argues that the ritual process: "is a matter of shaping actors in such a way that they wind up appropriating cultural meaning as personally held orientations" (1978: 5). When she says that within ritual "what we find is primarily manipulation of consciousness, of, by, and for actors" (1978: 5), she would appear to be describing a process in which this "meaning creation" is not being done by some people to others so much as a process into which people enter of

their own volition. Such rituals involve what I call *transference*, a process in which a transfer of authority is achieved *within* people: from an internal sense of authority and identity embedded in everyday relations (cf. Bloch 1989), to an external authority which has - through embodied experiences - become imbued with powerful emotions and internalised as ones identity.

If such transference is central to ritual in non-Western cultures, it could equally be central to the process of submitting to the external authority of imposed ideology in Western culture. Bloch, concurring with Althusser, appears to see education, the church and the mass media as central to this process (Bloch 1989). For example, the whole process of education, as an obligatory undertaking which from a very early age involves an experience of heightened opposition between the ordinary everyday world of home and the process of social competition at school, has many parallels with the ritual process as described by Victor Turner (1969) or Bloch (1992). However, the limits of Bloch's highly effective analysis prove to be the limits of the (largely Marxist) tradition in the social sciences whose preoccupation with oppression can conceal alternative discourses of irony, empowerment, humour and belonging. Ohnuki-Tierney describes Bloch's view as one which sees ritual as simply serving humans in their "illusionary exercises"; and states that "I find it difficult to see all cultures or symbolic systems, past and present, through this model and I find the difficulty reassuring" (1992: 20).

I will be examining Bloch's argument in relation to the *molimo* and the *nkumbi* rituals (Chapters 7 and 9). In considering the molimo, I argue that Bloch's understanding of the irreducible core of ritual reflects the central engrained experience of internal division and external domination of the environment which we are familiar with in the West, but which is neither at the core of the molimo nor at the core of Mbuti ways of relating to their environment. While the nkumbi can on one level be seen as a good example of Bloch's thesis, at another level the occasion is one of reaffirming social interdependence through a process in which the hierarchy being attempted in the ritual is forever being subverted by cross-cutting categories of relatedness. In looking at Mbuti involvement in the nkumbi, in gold extraction and in sorcery accusations I will be considering the ways in which power and powerlessness is reproduced as an internal state and is not simply the outcome of conflict between groups. In this sense the chapters which follow consider not simply the question of who benefits from controlling who, but why people collude in their own disempowerment. In Chapter 3 the contours of the landscape of colonial and post-colonial exploitation are described, while in Chapter 4 the way in which the Mbuti and other Zairians move through and thereby reproduce this landscape is analysed.

PART II: DEFORESTATION

CHAPTER 3 THE ITURI FOREST IN THE ZAIRIAN CONTEXT: Political Economy

This chapter places the experience of people in the Ituri Forest within the political and historical context of the relationship between Western power and Zairian people. It examines the root causes of inequitable land ownership and political powerlessness, and the predicament of landless farmers in the region of Kivu; and examines the impact of their movement into the Ituri Forest on its inhabitants.

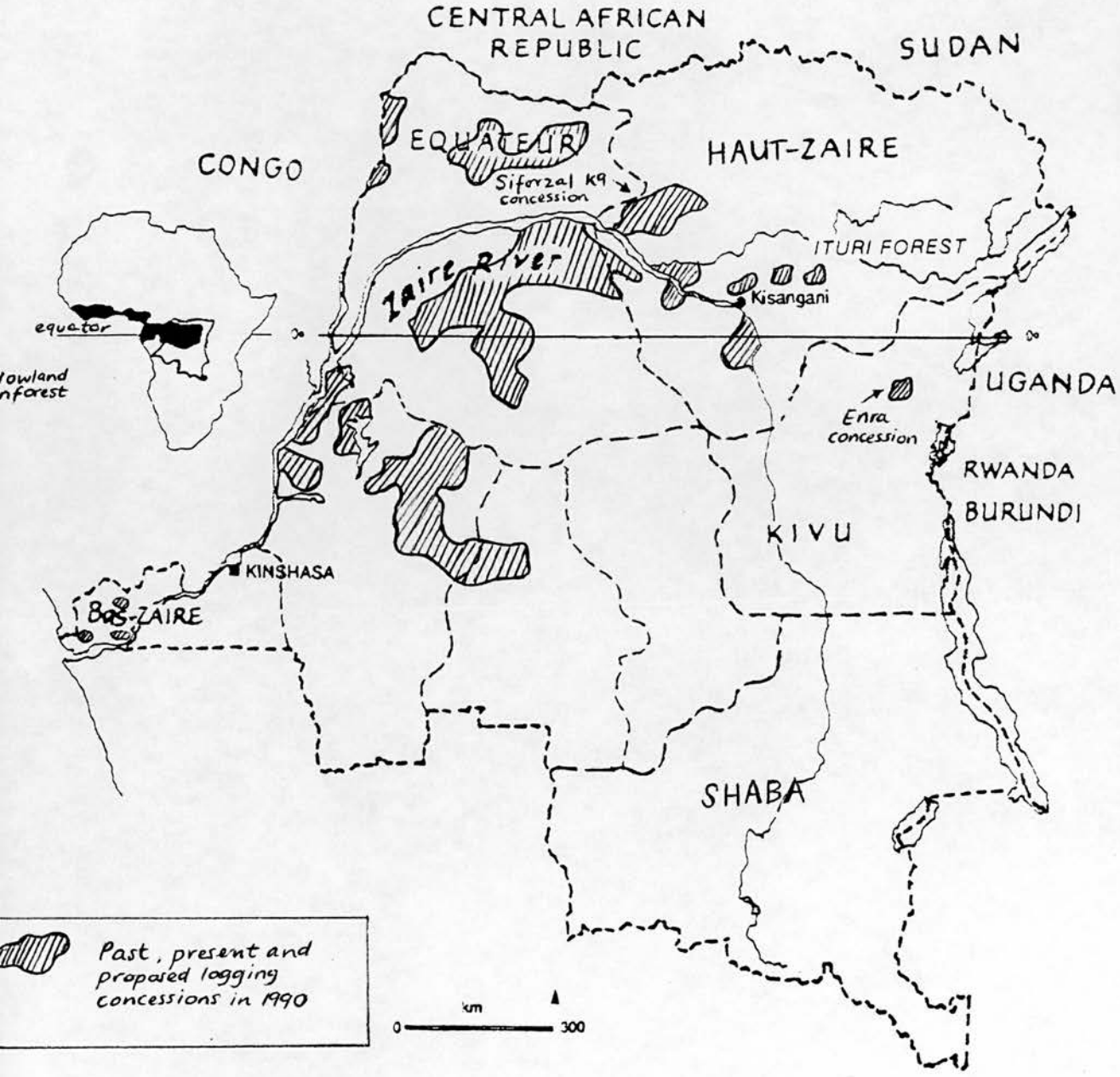
DEFORESTATION IN ZAIRE TODAY

Global concern about the fate of the rainforests has focused almost exclusively on the Amazon and Malaysia; by contrast, the constant destruction of the rainforests of Africa has been largely ignored. However from 1981-90 Africa lost seventeen per cent of its rainforest, Asia fourteen per cent and South America nine per cent (FAO 1990). Over seventy five per cent of the forests of West Africa have now been destroyed by European logging companies to produce timber for Europe, with a further nine per cent opened up for exploitation (Myers 1989).

With West Africa's forests all but finished, these logging companies are moving to the Central African rainforest block in the Zaire drainage basin; an area almost the size of Western Europe which represents twenty per cent of the worlds total tropical rainforest cover. At present logging is concentrated on the western fringes of this basin in Cameroon, Central African Republic and Gabon; but increasing attention is being paid to Zaire's forests. Beauclerk, in a report for Oxfam, concludes that there is a major effort to open up Africa's forests to meet debt repayments and fuel future development, but that this "will cause an increase in poverty rather than its resolution" (1991: 25).

Zaire is Africa's third largest country with over 200 different ethnic groups. The size of Western Europe, it has a population of only 34.5 million people, compared to Western Europe's 337 million. Zaire contains 12.5 per cent of the worlds remaining tropical rainforest; only Brazil and Indonesia have more. As well as its immense forests, it has vast deposits of cobalt, copper and diamonds; and its network of rivers are a natural transport system and huge potential source of hydro-electric power.

Fig. 1. Logging Concessions in Zaire



LOGGING CONCESSIONS IN ZAIRE

Its farming land is rich, with seventy per cent of the population involved in subsistence farming. Yet real wages, even before the upheavals of the early 1990's, were a tenth of what they were at independence, malnutrition is chronic, and eighty per cent of people live in absolute poverty (George 1988). In such a large and relatively fertile country it may appear peculiar that there is hunger, competition for land, and pressure on the rainforest arising from landlessness. However, commenting on the region of Kivu, which borders the Ituri Forest and is one of the lushest parts of Zaire, Fairhead notes that food security there "is not about how lush and productive the region is, but about *access* to its lushness, and to its product." (1989: 3).

Logging simply replicates on a large scale the continual small scale expropriation of land and resources from the poor which denies them access to their lands "lushness", and leads them to move into the forest to clear land for cultivation. The process of deforestation which has been rapidly underway in Zaire is one in which the activities of multinationals, such as Danzer Siforzal, and the dispossession of land owners both appear to be aspects of a deeper underlying cause. This is a form of wealth accumulation by the powerful which is based not on the accumulation and investment of capital, nor the maintenance of a strong political structure, but on the intentional creation and perpetuation of insecurity at all levels of society. The opposition leader Tshisekedi described Zaire as "ruled by an uncontrolled thief. It is a kleptocracy" (Winternitz, 1987: 234), and his sentiments are shared by many Zairians who describe President Mobutu as "le grand voleur". With the destruction of the traditional and dynamic political structures which preceded colonialism, a whole system of insecurity and institutionalised theft was established by Europeans towards the end of the last century. This established a relationship between central government and the rural population which has continued since independence, a relationship which mirrors the way Western governments and multinationals treat Zaire and Central Africa as a whole.

Zaire allocates its logging concessions on a 25-year lease. In theory Siforzal and the other Western logging companies will return to take a second cut but in reality this never happens since the amount of forest destroyed in the process of the first cut, and the influx of shifting cultivators, means that there will not be valuable trees left for a second cut. Logging is thus both highly selective and completely unsustainable. Only the best trees are taken, the average is 8.7 m3 (less than one tree) per hectare, and this low yield effectively quickens the pace at which further rainforest is opened up. Since the massive trunks can only be taken out of the forest on feeder tracks and logging routes before travelling downriver, these selectively logged areas are criss-crossed with a network of roads. In Bas-Zaire, which is relatively close to both Kinshasa and the ports, the heaviest logging

has occurred, and people have moved in in the wake of the loggers to clear huge areas for farming: now virtually no primary rainforest remains in Bas-Zaire. A similar future faces the other rainforest areas of Zaire, if the impoverishment of the ecosystem continues through logging, and the impoverishment of the poor continues through land appropriation and ever lower prices for their produce.

If logging plays an increasingly large part in opening the forest, what are the underlying causes which push cultivators into the forest along these roads? How are the same power relationships which are evident in relation to logging, at work in the system of land ownership and land use? To understand this requires taking a historical overview of indigenous political and land ownership systems, of how these were forcibly changed by the Belgians, and of the resulting political and economic system of land use and ownership as it is today.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF CONTROL OF THE LAND

In Paths in the Rainforest (1990) Vansina gives a historical account of the Western Bantu political tradition which flourished in Equatorial Africa until it was largely destroyed by the violence of colonialism. Vansina describes how from 3,000 BC the Bantu cultivators expanded from central Cameroun into the forest; which he argues had previously only been inhabited by the hunting and gathering 'Pygmies'. The ancestors of present day hunter-gatherers and the incoming farming peoples have been engaged in exchanging produce from the forest for iron and pottery artefacts, as well as for agricultural produce, for as long as they have both inhabited the forest. This perception of hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti as being the original inhabitants of the forest fits with the stories of the earliest contact between hunter-gatherers and farmers told by local people themselves; although it does not fit with the argument (Bailey et all 1989, Hart & Hart 1986) that hunter-gatherers could only have moved into the forest at the same time as the farmers since, without the starch farming makes available, it is not nutritionally possible to survive in the rainforest by hunting and gathering alone.

Over the years farming populations have expressed an ambivalent attitude towards their hunter-gatherer neighbours. Serge Bahuchet describes how in the Central African Republic farmers see their Aka hunter-gatherer neighbours as on the one hand slaves and barely human, and on the other tell stories which represent them as civilising beings who invented fire, farming or metallurgy (Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982: 189-211). This ambivalence is reflected in the variety of relations between hunter-gatherers and farmers today, which

ranges from virtual serfdom to freely entered exchange relations. The hunter-gatherers traditional system of land ownership differs from that of the farming people described in the next section, in so far as their corporate rights to land are not related to cultivation but to gathering, fishing and hunting. However, their rights to land rests on the same combination of defined territories and flexible group membership as has traditionally been the case for their neighbouring farmers.

From 2,000 years ago major changes such as the development of metallurgy and the introduction of cereal crops, initially from Southeast Asia and more recently from America, enabled an increase in wealth and further expansion into the forest, as well as sustaining a wide network of trade routes. In Vansina's view the incoming farmers tradition taught them to aim at the greatest degree of local autonomy consistent with their need for security. It was a tradition in which each household could freely choose to which village it would belong because of the frequent changes of village sites required by the process of shifting cultivation. He points not to societies which have suddenly had to cope with development because of contact with the West, but to vigorous and developing societies devastated by the West. Schultz' fieldwork (1991) among the Batua Pygmies of the central Congo basin in Zaire likewise uncovers the extent of the individual suffering and consequent social disruption caused by Belgian rule. In this analysis, colonialism, far from introducing development, violently wrecked a long tradition of adaptable and developing political and economic systems in Central Africa (see also Bahuchet 1985/88?: 139-148). The excuse of the missionaries, merchants and colonial officials was that they were bringing 'civilisation', but in the Belgian Congo there was never any way of moving from being a black 'native' to being a 'civilised' white; and strenuous efforts were made to limit peoples movements, commercial enterprises and educational opportunities. Today similar justifications for Western economic interventions which benefit the West and impoverish the majority of Zairians are couched in terms of 'development'; a term as undefinable and, in Western culture, as unarguably 'good' as the term 'civilisation' was for us until the two world wars made us doubt our superior civilised status. Development, in the sense of developing appropriate ways to meet changing needs, is clearly an aspect of any society. However, one society imposing on another its ideas of what this constitutes is clearly a dubious enterprise at the very least.

TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF LAND OWNERSHIP

Crop Diversity and Shifting Cultivation

There has been a continual introduction and spread of new crops into and through the region. From the vegetable-banana 2000 years ago, which unlike yams does not need a dry season and requires much less care, enabling farmers to settle in many new areas and produce surpluses to exchange with hunter-gatherers; through to manioc, twice as productive in calories per acre as the next most productive starchy-staple, and unlike many other crops only introduced into many areas in the last hundred years (Miracle 1967: 287).

When talking of 'slash and burn' farmers, or shifting cultivators, it is important to make the distinction between those who have been forced through poverty and land appropriation into clearing the forest to grow what they can, without any knowledge of how to manage their ecosystem productively and sustainably; and those whose families have farmed sustainably in this way for thousands of years. Writing in the mid-sixties Miracle pointed out that:

> In the Congo Basin it is not uncommon for a farmer to grow thirty or more different crops. . . In addition to main fields, a number of special fields or gardens are often made in microenvironments suited to particular crops or crop combinations . . . (1967: 283).

The monoculture of the plantation cash crop system introduced by the Belgians, and pursued by the powerful landholding elite since independence, goes directly against this tradition of complexity and diversity.

Land Ownership

Harms argues that traditionally land in Zaire is held by corporate groups which are not stable, but are constantly dividing, merging and shifting. The corporate group that holds the land is usually small - a village or a part of a village; and the person responsible for land is relatively low in the political hierarchy. This is due to the prevalence of shifting agriculture, which means plots are cultivated only temporarily; and the low population density, which means new plots are easily found and there is consequently little interest in maintaining permanent rights to land. "Sometimes individuals move their fields, while at other times the whole village moves, causing a complete redistribution of the land" (Harms 1974: 2). He continues:

> The individual cultivator, who gains rights to a plot of land by putting it under cultivation, maintains his rights until he abandons the field for another. In land held by lineages, strangers can gain rights in land. The key test is residence (Harms 1974: 2).

According to Jewsiewicki shifting agriculture "preserved a supple relationship between lineage or clan groups and villages" enabling conflicts to be solved through the break up of groups (1983?: 112). With the establishment of Belgian rule which forcibly kept people in the villages where they were registered, this way of resolving conflict, and enabling social relations to evolve, was stopped.

For example, Fairhead describes how eighty years ago land was plentiful in Kivu, and clan communities of about 150 households existed as oases within the otherwise unfelled forest. The clan that was recognised as the first to inhabit a particular area of forest was entitled to distribute the land to others who wanted to farm it; "the legitimacy of a dominant clan was rooted in the power of its ancestral grouping whose chief knew best the mediating rituals which could infuse the relevant ancestors with enough goodwill to bring fortune and fertility on those living on the land" (1989: 2). Strangers were normally welcomed to settle since they increased the clans productive and military strength, increasing the authority of the chief. Jewsiewicki summarises the ideology behind land ownership and power as "a lineage ideology based on the notion of seniority. This ideology was attached to the political control of a territory of which the perpetual "property" was symbolically held by the ancestors, and in reality by their representatives, the elders" (1981: 94). Before Belgian rule this system could be very flexible: people could join or leave the group, and the youth would one day become the elders themselves.

LAND OWNERSHIP UNDER THE BELGIANS

The Congo Free State

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a sudden rise in Western demand for African gathered and hunted materials, primarily rubber and ivory. Swahili merchants from East Africa, and European merchants and state representatives, sought to extract and transport these products through enslaving or employing African labour. The demand for raw materials and the competition between colonial powers led to the formation of colonial states designed to take over the regions economic resources. In Zaire this began in 1885 with the imposition of the Congo Free State, the personal possession of King Leopold II of Belgium. The Congo Free State became a byword for cruel and violent exploitation. According to Oliver (1991), the forest region suffered more severely than any other in Africa during the early years of colonial rule, because its only tangible wealth was in wild rubber and ivory, which could most easily be obtained by forcing the agricultural peoples of the riversides, often at gunpoint, to move into the forest to gather and hunt these products. He believes that these forest population may have been reduced by half during

this period, and that subsequent colonial and missionary influence was proportionately stronger in its impact on the survivors.

'Vacant' Land and Concessions

In 1885 the Congo Free State seized all so-called 'vacant' land not directly occupied, and in 1890 declared itself to be the owner of all natural products of the forest. The state thereby reserved exclusive rights to all the wild rubber, ivory and copal, which were its main source of revenue. However there was virtually no 'vacant' land. Uncultivated land was held by different corporate groups who possessed "gathering rights, which gave any member of the group free access to the wild products of the forest while at the same time excluding members of other groups" (Harms 1974: 11). Harms states that:

> Although the Congo Free State generally recognised cultivation rights on cleared land, it completely ignored gathering rights, which were equally well defined and regulated by customary law (ibid).

For example, the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber and Exploration Company (Abir) was given a concession of about 30,000 square miles. The people living in the concession had to collect rubber for the company as a way of paying taxes to the state. Those men who failed to meet their quota were beaten, imprisoned or shot. As frequent tapping caused the supply to become exhausted, men had to work nearly full time to fulfil their quotas. There was no time to clear new fields for the women to cultivate, and famine struck. By 1910 it became apparent that the rubber in this region and throughout Zaire was depleted. The state abandoned the rubber tax, and in 1911 gave the Lever Brothers 750,000 acres of the best palm groves on the 'vacant' lands. They claimed ownership of all palm groves that were not directly joined to villages, despite the fact that each was already owned by a local person or lineage. The government then instituted a tax in money to force people to work for Lever, and again people were often impoverished and cultivation abandoned since they had to work full time for the company to pay their taxes.

The Free State thus set the scene for the modern day ownership of all forest lands by the Zairian state. Under Leopold the Abir and Anveroise Concessionary companies received vast areas of forest to exploit and manage for a pre-determined period of time in order to extract rubber and ivory. Today companies such as Siforzal and La Forestiere are likewise given effective power over huge areas to extract timber. It is a similar case of central government being too administratively weak to exploit and manage the areas itself, and so having to resign itself to indirect management through European companies.

Forced Cultivation for the State

In the eastern Congo farmers were forced to grow rice and other food crops, initially to feed troops stationed there during World War I, and subsequently to supply the mining and urban areas. Cotton was introduced in 1915, and each year villagers were required to extend their cotton fields in order to pay their taxes. Required cultivation of cotton, palm trees, rice, etc., greatly expanded the amount of land under cultivation and caused farmers to plant on fallow land long before it had recovered. The result was a continuous degradation of the soil, widespread undernourishment of the people, and rural depopulation.

From the early 1930s right up to independence in 1960, the government tried to counter this depopulation by enforcing new methods of cultivation that, in theory, would not exhaust the soil. The first rotation system, the *paysannat*, placed all landowners strips side by side in a block in an attempt to rationalise land use and fix land tenure in individual holdings. Under the indigenous system farmers had scattered their fields to take advantage of the best soil, while under the new system people were arbitrarily allocated soil which was often almost useless. Arbitrary allocation often meant that "strangers often received land belonging to the local group . . . [and so] the strangers . . . lived in fear that someday the landholding group would drive them out. Thus a system designed to provide security of tenure often increased insecurity" (Harms, 1974: 18).

Political Control

In the Congo Free State, (renamed the Belgian Congo in 1908, when the Belgian government took it over from the discredited King Leopold), chiefs were the mainstay of government rule and labour policy. They often struggled to defend their people as much as possible, while meeting enough of the excessive demands of the colonial authorities to retain their position. Northrup describes how "Many, such as the great Zande rulers Mopoie, Sasa, and Semio, passively resisted the ever-growing government demands for rubber, porters and food in an effort to retain the support of their subjects but soon found themselves displaced or replaced by government appointees"(1988: 44). Others used the Free State's presence to become vastly more powerful in relation to their neighbours or their own people. Colonial officials often negotiated land agreements with such chiefs despite the fact that those with traditional authority over land were generally much lower in the political hierarchy.

Under the Belgians all Africans were excluded from credit, from private ownership of land and from the right to hire employees. Northrup describes how punitive taxes were

introduced specifically to put African small businesses out of business, and so nip the creation of an African middle class in the bud. Likewise the learning of French was restricted to urbanised Africans, so that the different ethnic groups in the countryside would not develop a common language. At independence only three out of 10,000 higher civil servants were black. Meanwhile migration was controlled by passes to impede flight from taxation and from obligatory cultivation or roadwork (Jewsiewicki 1983: 119).

Aside from the physical violence and forced labour, the devastation caused by Belgian rule lay in its destroying the dynamic nature of the traditional political and land owning system. Further, it blocked any creative adaptation to the impact of Western institutions and demands, by maintaining a stifling system of government appointed chiefs, taxes and laws; and an underlying paternalism which, at best, treated the Africans as children who could never grow up.

POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Mobutu's Control and Use of State Power

Immediately after independence in 1960 the army mutinied against its exclusively European officer corps. The new radical-leaning Lumumba government tried desperately to contain the situation by placing the army in the hands of some former non-commissioned officers; and Mobutu became Chief of Staff. After the attempted secession of mineral-rich Shaba and Kasai, the murder of Lumumba, and the intervention and subsequent departure of UN forces, a disorganised but pervasive revolutionary movement developed. In the Ituri Forest they were known as the Simbas (lions) and their presence caused most forest villagers to flee into the forest with their Mbuti or Efe neighbours; or else stay to be killed or to join the Simbas themselves. As the states soldiers fled, the Kinshasa government employed white mercenaries and Belgian-American troops to break the rebellion. In 1965, during a political deadlock between politicians in Kinshasa, General Mobutu seized power.

The first five years of Zairian independence had resulted in huge damage to the economy, and the precedent of a high degree of international involvement in Zaire's affairs was established. After such a terrifying five years of disorder and insecurity, Mobutu's promise to impose order through establishing a strong, unitary, depoliticised regime was overwhelmingly welcomed. In 1967 he established a one party state, and for a while the economy appeared to recover, but Zaire rapidly built up a huge external debt to fund prestige projects, or to buy industrial plant that was heavily reliant on imports. Mobutu consolidated power by co-opting radicals and would-be opponents into his regime. The

centralisation of state power was accompanied by a concentration of economic revenues in the small circle around the President. After returning from a visit to China in 1972 Mobutu outlawed Western dress and non-Zairian first names in his campaign for Zairian 'authenticité'. In 1973 foreign assets were nationalised and divided between those in favour with the regime. In the Ituri region, it was only after this 'Zairianisation' that the demands for food and money by the gendarmes and the military really intensified.

This destruction of the governmental, economic and physical infrastructure in order to enable the continuation of Mobutu's patronage politics has been the hallmark of his regime. In the 1970's, wages fell, agriculture was completely neglected, and the economy collapsed. Meanwhile the President acquired a large stake in many huge concerns including Siforzal, the plantation empire Celza, and Pharmakina - a subsidiary of Bayer. In 1988 Zaire's debt was $5 billion and growing, and was estimated to be roughly equivalent to the amount the President had taken from Zaire. Meanwhile five per cent of the country's profits from minerals were continuously being paid into his overseas accounts, and in 1990 thirty per cent of the country's operating budget was estimated to be passing through the Presidential office with no further accounting (George 1988: 107). George has detailed the huge profits those at the top of the regime have been making while the vast majority of Zairians struggle to survive.

Although most Western critics of Zaire are quick to outline the intimate involvement of the IMF, World Bank, Western governments and multinationals in supporting this regime (George 1988), they often fail to explain the historical and cultural forces which maintain Mobutu in power.

What has Maintained Mobutu in Power?

Historically, the West prepared the ground for Mobutu to seize power. Not only had colonialism destroyed the indigenous political systems, but it had deliberately sought to stop Africans from gaining the education or gaining administrative experience which might enable them to engage effectively in the imposed political system. When independence came the Western powers sought to destabilise Lumumba's socialist leaning elected government, and then fully supported Mobutu's one party state. Thus today, many of the older villagers in the Ituri remember the colonial period as a time of relative stability and prosperity, when the road that runs through the Ituri was almost always passable, when at least one person in each village owned a bicycle, and when the lucrative hunting of elephants for ivory was encouraged rather than forbidden (as it is at present by the Forest Reserve Authorities). "[E]ven 'liberal' voices in the West advocate the recolonization of

Africa to save it from the alleged failures of independence with its haunting and perennial images of poverty, famine, and warfare" writes Zeleza (1994: 183). Zeleza, however, goes on to summarise the analysis of Depelchin (1992) who demonstrated quite clearly that the rise of Mobutu's regime was not fortuitous but was a continuation of the repressive regime which preceded it:

> Mobutu is nothing more than a reincarnation of the venal Leopold II who, like the former, also treated the Congo as his personal property (Zeleza 1994: 183).

Culturally, the lineage ideology that had always underpinned questions of power and land ownership in Zaire continued to be used first by the Belgian, and then by the Mobutist state, to maintain itself in power. Vansina explains how before the colonial era, lineage ideology justified why some had more authority and wealth than others on the basis of seniority. The youth believed that some day they might themselves become elders. Schatzberg (1988: 83-98) points out how Belgian paternalism was an essential aspect of colonial policy, and how Mobutu used the image of himself as the strict but benevolent father of the nation very powerfully in a context in which great insecurity at all levels of society led people to need the emotional security the image of the father suggests. When he came to power he claimed he would only rule for five years and his popularity remained high, but in Schatzberg's view when it became clear that the 'elder' was not going to relinquish power to his 'sons', his political legitimacy faded fast. Thus the lineage ideology, which maintained a dynamic political system before colonisation, became a way of freezing the situation with Mobutu at the top, and the 'children' having no chance to succeed him peacefully. Bisaili, a Bila fisher farmer at the village of Utama in the Ituri, claimed that Mobutu had had his son killed in Libya, where his son had fled after telling his father that "you are rich and have been in power for a long time, why don't you pass the work of governing on to others". In Bisaili's eyes this story showed how unfit Mobutu was to continue governing, even though Bisaili had fought under Mobutu against the Simba rebellion and had welcomed him then as a saviour.

Many Zairians attribute Mobutu's power to sorcery. A trader based in Mambasa told the story of Mobutu inviting traditional chiefs to Kinshasa, and then not allowing them to leave until they had signed a piece of paper promising to give him their *Giri-giri* (magic). The act of signing the paper was like writing a cheque, which constituted a psychological handing over of power and authority by the chiefs. Likewise his description of Mobutu going to Italy, Persia and India to obtain the most powerful Giri-giri was not as far fetched as it might sound: Mobutu had managed to obtain superb public relations advertising men from Italy, who are arguably the people who possess Western Giri-giri: the knowledge of how to exert psychological power to defeat opponents and subvert and seduce the sceptical.

Their ability to twist news to Mobutu's advantage was evident when, following riots in Kinshasa, international radio stations described how "calm was restored by Mobutu's elite troops", the very same troops who had caused the riots in the first place. Mobutu would presumably be happy with the traders explanations for, as Schatzberg writes, "President Mobutu also likes people to believe that he has certain occult powers" (1993: 448). Intimating that one may be a sorcerer can be a powerful way of exerting power.

One of the strongest cards Mobutu still carries is that he is Zaire: since it was he who introduced Zairianisation and the name Zaire. 'Zaire' in the minds of many of the inhabitants of that country is a word that connects not simply with Mobutu's corruption but also with the distinctively flamboyant dress, music and attitudes which Mobutu managed to appropriate as being 'Zairoise'. His populist ability to find the right phrase to connect with the reality of peoples lives is another strong part of the matrix supporting his power which intertwines corruption and power with his personality, and with the lineage ideology which was at the heart of his earlier legitimacy. Mbembe (1992) has brilliantly demonstrated the way in which power, in countries such as Zaire, is often exercised through the production of the burlesque, through an intimate relationship between the ruler and the powerless in which the violence of power involves the theatrical, glamour, and intoxication (1992: 14). There is, writes Mbembe, a willing conviviality and complicity on the part of the masses as shown by the constant compromises, the small tokens of fealty as when people turn out to see the president's procession or wear cloth imprinted with the president's face. Mbembe claims that there are "myriad ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it directly", and that by doing so "the subject is reaffirming that [power] is incontestable - precisely in order the better to play with it and modify it whenever possible" (1992: 25). Mbembe claims that "in their desire for a certain majesty, the masses join in the madness and clothe themselves in cheap imitations of power so as to reproduce it's epistemology" (1992: 29).

By the mid-seventies the state had clearly degenerated into institutionalised corruption, and the country became locked in a cycle of debt and dependency. With the Soviet-Cuban intervention in the Angolan civil war and then in Ethiopia, Mobutu was able to present himself to the West as the only alternative to chaos and communism. With Western support; an ability to co-opt would-be opponents into his regime; and the ability to coerce the population through the maintenance of such a low standard of living, such bad communications, and a constant state of fear of the security services; his survival (through external support) was assured until very recently.

In the early 1990s two of his three major external supporters (Belgium and the United States) removed their support and worked to facilitate a transition to multi-party democracy; the third, France, continued it's support by intervening militarily at crucial moments. At the height of the unrest in Kinshasa when the opposition might have overthrown Mobutu, the French government moved French troops onto the streets of Kinshasa, ostensibly to assist the evacuation of Westerners. The stability they brought gave Mobutu time to respond to the opposition. But external support has always been only one aspect of his strength, the other being his ability to divide and rule through using the language and power of cultural tradition, and through personally embodying Zaire.

The central problem which the opposition faces is that in seeking to take control of the state they appear to give it legitimacy, and so undermine the very basis of their power, which is the assertion of local identity against the hegemony of the state. This fragmentation, that was nationally a weakness for the opposition, was locally the reason for it's strength since it represented local peoples reassertion of their rights as against the power of the corrupt state system. It was the tragedy of this period that Mobutu's ability to divide and rule turned this attempt to push for the rights of a vast diversity of groups, into warfare between ethnic groups which enabled him to present himself as the saviour of the nation: the only person able to save the country from the chaotic bloodbath he was himself busy creating.

THE CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION FROM KIVU INTO THE ITURI FOREST

The continuing concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few, the growing of cash crops, the expansion of ranching, and the general insecurity enforced by those in power, forces farmers in Kivu into becoming dependant labourers or to move to escape poverty. Whether they have to move into the Ituri rather than other areas of Kivu, is a moot point, but certainly their moving into forested regions threatens both the forest, and the livelihood of its traditional inhabitants. The forest is cut to clear land for cultivation, to send to the more populated areas as charcoal or firewood, or for logging companies to export timber to East Africa. The search for gold in the Ituri Forest is another attraction, especially since the liberalisation of the gold laws in the 1970s. To understand the process which dispossesses Kivu farmers and leads to malnutrition and poverty in this agriculturally lush region, it is necessary to grasp the political and historical processes of dispossession.

During colonisation Belgian companies sought to turn land used for subsistence agriculture into land on which they could grow cash crops. However, "all the areas suitable for Arabica coffee production . . . were in relatively heavily populated areas, as the altitudes favourable for Arabica production were also favourable for local agriculture" (Fairhead, 1989: 7). Through corrupting the customary chiefs, cultivators land was declared 'vacant' and plantations set up, and the chiefs benefited through 'selling' land that was not really theirs. In a similar fashion the Parc National Albert (now the Parc National des Virunga) expanded and removed its inhabitants through a process of bribery and the declaration of areas as being 'vacant', thus forcing their inhabitants to move elsewhere and pay tribute to those amongst whom they then lived.

Recruitment to plantations was at first achieved through forced labour; and later through the raising of taxes, combined with the destruction of any alternatives to paid labour on the plantations or in the mines. Chiefs were bribed to evict political enemies to force them into the labour market, and thus became far more powerful and unpopular, as they were paid to aid labour recruitment (Kalala, 1989: 8). Since independence the appropriation of land from cultivators has continued, and their conditions have worsened considerably.

The same structures operate today as operated in the early colonial period, to force people into unpaid employment. State and local authorities collaborate in forcing people off their land. Those with power, wealth and influence, are now more than ever able to manipulate the land grant system to appropriate many lands already occupied. The local elite claim the land is theirs by tradition, while the state elite uses state laws and central government influence to lay claim; meanwhile farmers often end up as dependant unpaid labourers. Since land is increasingly valuable "repression, including arrests, extortion and crop destruction have been employed against peasants who have refused to abandon their homes and fields. Many have been forced off the land; others now work in exchange for squatters rights" (Fairhead 1989: 17). It has become in the interests of the landowners to create a dispossessed landless class, so that they can pay low or no wages by offering people land to cultivate, in return for personal security and labour obligations. Transnationals such as Pharmakina, the Zairian subsidiary of Bayer, promote the growth of export crops. These compete for resources with subsistence crops and, as the impact of international lending agencies structural adjustments is felt in higher taxes, and higher prices of tools and consumer goods, the prices paid for crops fall. "Peasants are pressured to produce more, to sell more and to do so on less land" (Schoepf & Schoepf, 1990: 99) thus contributing to the numbers of landless unemployed, to hunger and to putting further pressure on the forest.

In the climate of insecurity and scarcity for all but the landowning elite, there is continual conflict between different ethnic groups. One ethnic group will claim it has traditional land rights and that other groups came as immigrants and therefore have no lasting rights. In many cases the only recourse of the poor is the Catholic church, but in its battle against ancestor worship the church usually opposes traditional land claims and supports those who have purchased land contrary to customary land rights. Although in some cases this may protect poorer immigrants from dispossession, it may equally support the moneyed elite against poorer farmers traditional land claims (Fairhead 1989: 19). The continuing violence meted out to villagers by the army, secret police, gendarmes, and state officials, reflects the way in which every time a new hierarchy is introduced it is those at the bottom who have to feed it, and whose insecurity is increased. The state may be weak in terms of management, administration, and ineffectual laws such as that passed to protect cultivators land rights and to end feudalism in 1972; but its coercive and terrorising arms are extremely effective. Thus the levels of poverty and insecurity can be seen to have been increasing continuously since independence in Kivu, as elsewhere in Zaire. The appropriation of land is always to the benefit of the powerful elites, whether it is for ranching, logging, or for plantations. Without security of land tenure, and political security, pressure on the forest is increasing fast.

THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION FROM KIVU INTO THE ITURI FOREST

In 1971 the town of Oicha in north Kivu was completely surrounded by forest, today the women have to walk more than 15 kilometres to reach the forest and collect firewood, before returning the 15 kilometres home. From Oicha south to Beni the whole area used to be forest but has now been cut down primarily in order for companies to log timber, grow tea and coffee, and export all three. Thus in Kivu itself forest destruction has resulted from large companies seeking profits as well as from the poor seeking to survive. To some extent this is also true of those who have emigrated from Kivu into the Ituri Forest in Haut-Zaire. The reason why Nande move to the Ituri rather than to other less populated areas of Kivu is, as we shall see in the next chapter, as much to do with the pull of gold as it is to do with the push of landlessness.

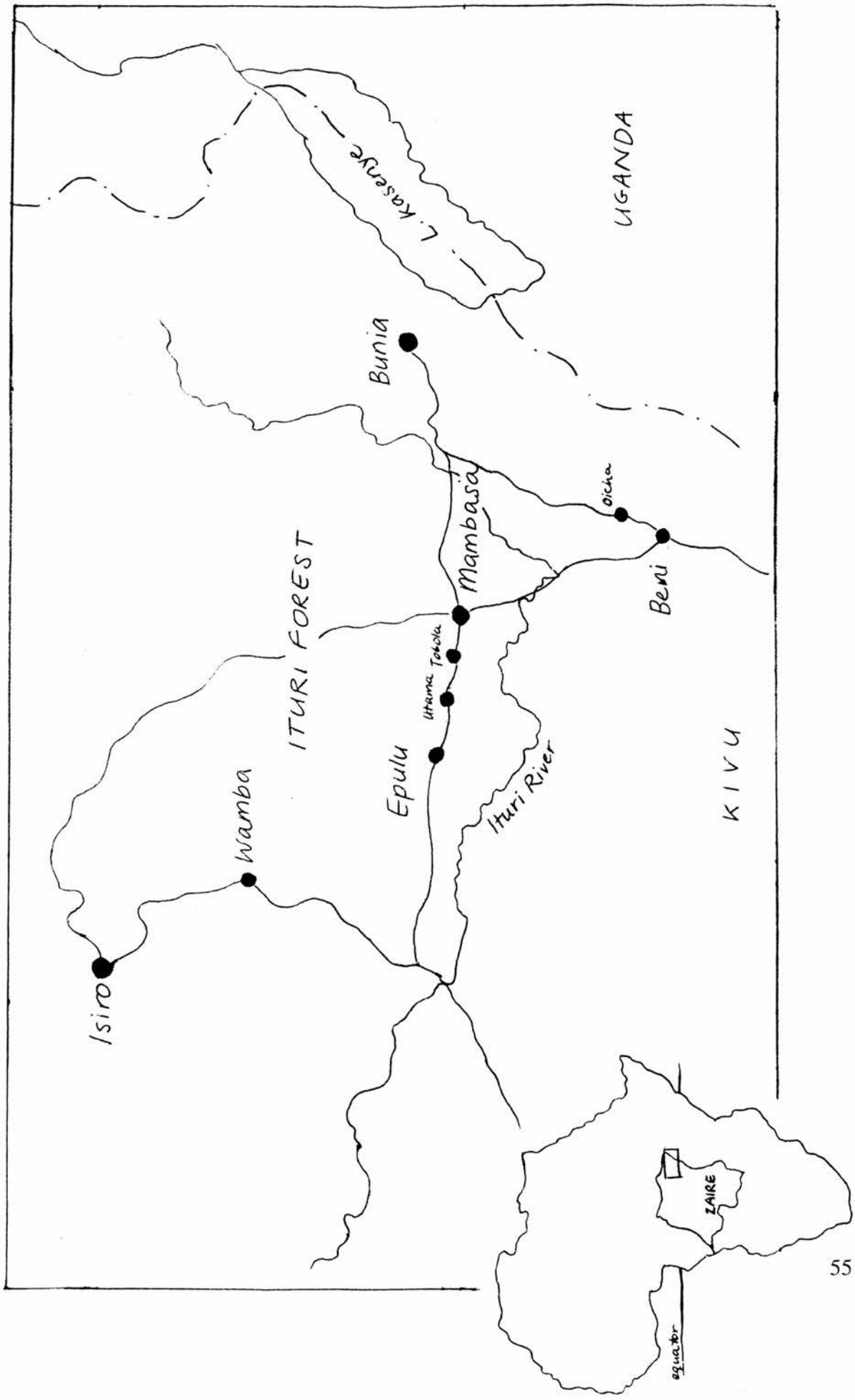
As Peterson points out (1990: 58-59), in high population density areas in the Ituri Forest, incoming farmers make less use of forest products than local forest people, and concentrate on clearing large areas to grow cash crops, resulting in permanent conversion of the forests

to agricultural fields which allow for no secondary regrowth. Traditional farmers in the Ituri, by contrast, use a cyclical shifting cultivation system which allows the forest to regenerate for ten or twenty years before they relocate their village and return to create fields on the replenished soil.

While Peterson comments that definite areas of strict forest protection are needed to protect the forest, he adds that it is equally important to avoid conservation policies which 'blame the victim' (1990: 61). He argues that most immigrants arriving on the forest frontier are themselves facing severe crises, and forest clearing needs to be seen as a desperate last-choice response to deeper causal factors (1991). While supporting his suggestion that land reform in Kivu is vital to the protection of the forest, the biologists notion of "areas of strict protection" in the Ituri is more problematic. Such an approach does not recognise that it is not the forest which needs to be protected from humans, but sustainable human involvement in the forest which needs to be protected from abusive external forces. For this reason I am dubious about his suggestion that: "efforts to create areas of strict protection [should be] coupled with applied conservation/ development initiatives directed at the root causes of forest destruction" (1990: 61).While it is important to argue (as Peterson does) for land rights for the Mbuti, it is equally important to acknowledge that their relationship with the forest is not necessarily fundamentally distinct from that of their Bila village neighbours. What is needed are not "areas of strict protection" or "development initiatives" which draw people away from their involvement in the forest, but ways of supporting sustainable human involvement in the forest.

In the central Ituri the traditional exchange of garden and forest produce between the farmers and the Mbuti, has involved the Mbuti in maintaining long-term relations with farmers. By contrast, the Nande tend to provide for their own labour needs through formal organised co-operatives, or through employing Mbuti on an occasional basis. When Mbuti become dependent on recent incomers this can have a detrimental impact on Mbuti relations both with their traditional village neighbours and with the forest which can severely affect their nutrition, health and quality of life, as we shall see in the following chapter. However the process by which such dependency is established involves not simply the imposition of control which has been the central theme of this chapter. It also involves the attempt by local people to turn the impact of external forces to their advantage by exploiting and so coming to embody those forces.

Fig. 2. The Ituri Forest Region



CHAPTER 4 MBUTI INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST DESTRUCTION: The Lure of Gold

This chapter examines the dynamics of gold extraction and the creation of cash crop plantations by incomers on the eastern edge of the Forest Reserve. The broad picture of a hierarchy of exploitation depicted in the previous chapter gives way to complex local experience in which people attempt to turn the impact of external forces to their advantage by exploiting and so coming to embody those forces.

This chapter examines whether Nande incomers are primarily the victims of resource appropriation in Kivu, or are opportunists intent on expanding their kin group's resource base; whether the gold extractors who appear to be exploiting the situation, are literally suffering under an illusion; and whether those Mbuti who appear to be being exploited are simply using this appearance to their advantage.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION

The immediate threats to the forest

While conducting research on the eastern edge of the forest reserve being created in the Ituri, it became clear that the twin threats to the forest - gold extraction and large scale immigration - are inextricably linked. The threat of gold extraction is mainly through the clearing of forest to create the large *shambas* (fields) needed to support the gold panners. Very few gold panners do anything more than survive; the beneficiaries are the PDGs (President Directeur Generals) who control the concessions and the shambas associated with them, and who make their wealth mostly out of selling shamba produce to the panners at extortionate prices. They are the spinners of the gold illusion, and the more people they can catch in their web, the wealthier they become.

The most serious long term threat to sustainable Mbuti/Bila/Forest relations comes from the influx of Nande people from the region of Kivu to the east. Although often drawn by the gold illusion and by the free land available in exchange for the back breaking work of clearing the forest, and a token gift to the local Bila chief, the Nande would *appear* to be primarily the victims of being *pushed* off their land back home, rather than being *pulled* by the illusion of gold 'wealth' and 'free' land. Where the Bila tend to clear small shambas and maintain traditional material and ritual exchange relations over time with particular Mbuti bands; Nande settlers tend to clear far larger shambas to grow cash crops, both for external markets and for gold panners, and employ Mbuti as wage labourers without the

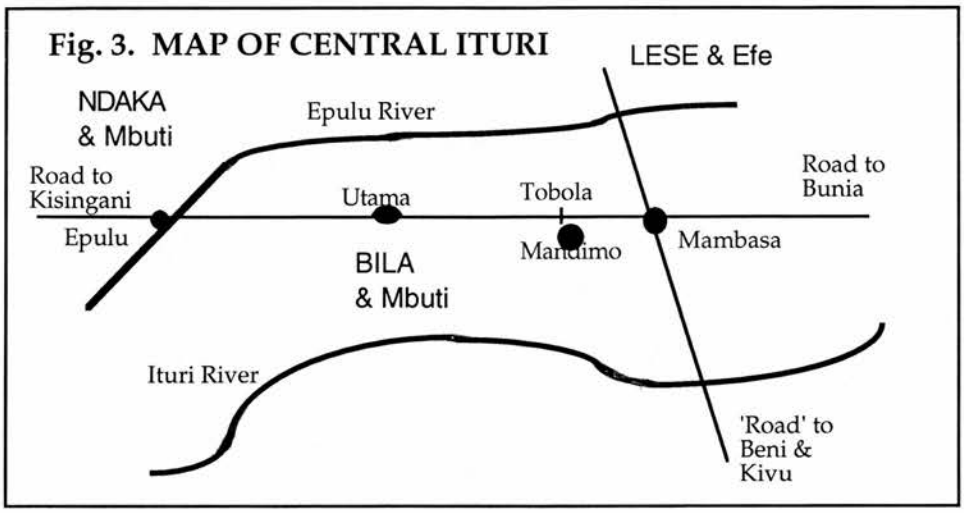
two groups maintaining any longer term mutual responsibility towards each other or the forest. Although, in the central Ituri region, the Bila can manipulate their traditional relationship with the Mbuti to control the extraction of bushmeat; it is generally the Nande and other groups from outside the forest who are the motor and market for the wholesale extraction of bushmeat and charcoal from the forest edges.

The researcher's position: different research strategies, different results

My first period of research in the Ituri was spent at Mandimo, a small Mbuti camp on the edge of the forest, just beyond the last of a series of huge shambas recently created by incomers. The camp was positioned where the pathways from the roadside through the different shambas converged, before spreading out into the forest towards the different gold camps further south. The paths originated from two neighbouring roadside villages to the north: Kilimanwezi, a largely Bila village of eighteen households, and Tobola, a Nande village of fifty Nande and five Bila households, whose expanding shambas reached almost as far as Mandimo.

My immediate intention, in studying the social relations here at the forests edge, was to follow up fieldwork embarked on by Rick Peterson. His study highlighted the differing Nande and Bila impacts on the forest, seeing the Nande as victims of land appropriation elsewhere, and the Mbuti as being exploited by the Nande (Peterson 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992). One of his study areas was this Nande village of Tobola, situated on the main dirt road that runs through the Ituri forest from Kivu in the east to Epulu and Kisangani in the west. The Mbuti encampment at Mandimo is effectively on the forest frontier at the edge of the patchworks of shambas spreading into the forest.

I had arrived intending to complement his study of the causes and consequences of Nande immigration, by looking at the situation from the Mbuti point of view. The contrast between my findings and those of Peterson's earlier ethnography, appears to be largely the result of where I positioned myself in relation to others. Peterson established himself by the road, living and working with the Nande in their fields, and tended to identify the Nande as farmers who had been pushed into the Ituri by the search for land (1991: 102). Working alongside these farmers he also saw the Mbuti primarily in terms of the work they provided for the Nande. As such, he saw the Mbuti as victims, exploited as wage labourers by this recent influx of farmers and gold panners. However, looked at from the position I was in - in this Mbuti 'gold camp' on the border between the forest and the expanding immigrants fields - the situation appeared to be quite different.



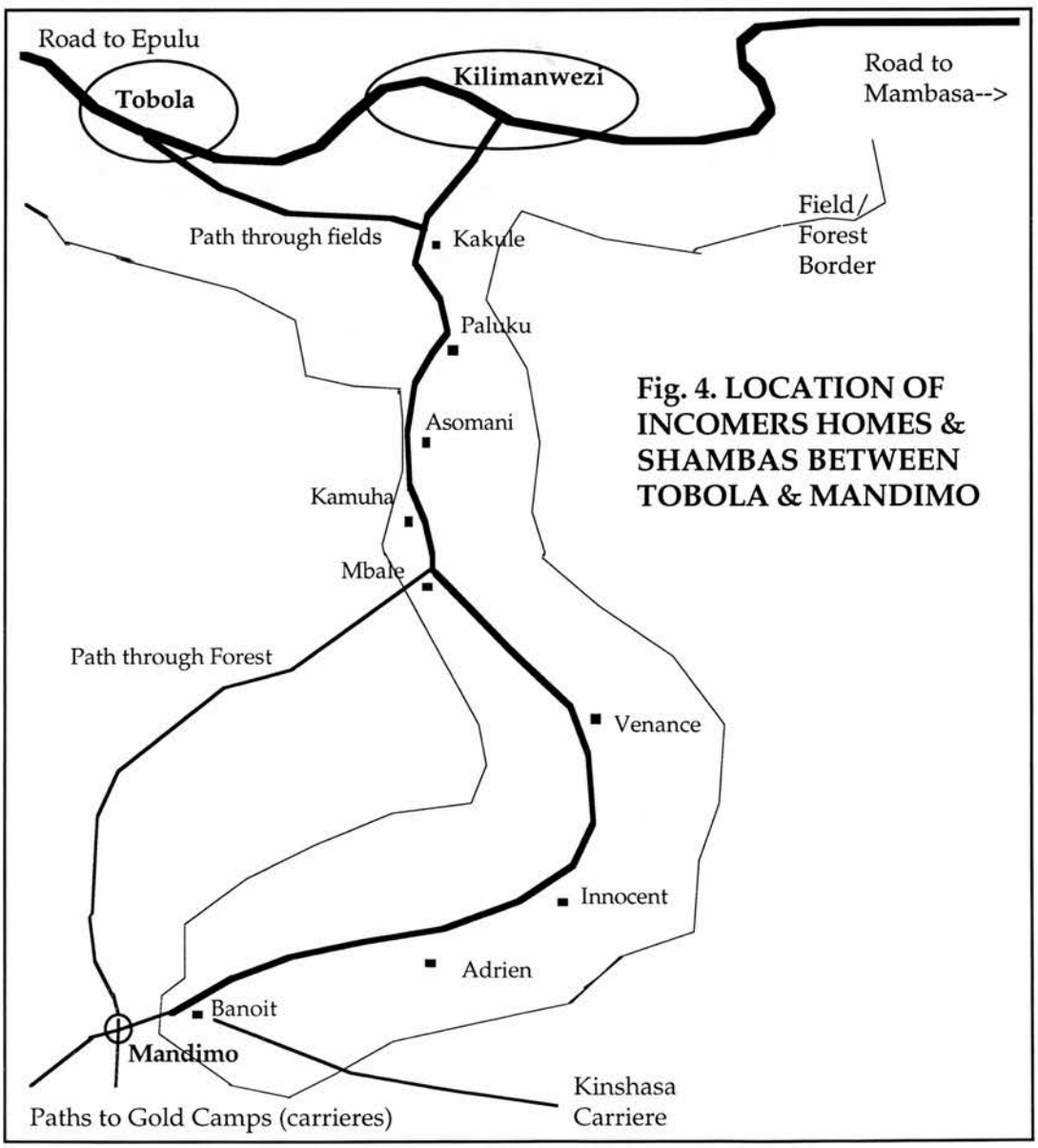


Fig. 4. LOCATION OF INCOMERS HOMES & SHAMBAS BETWEEN TOBOLA & MANDIMO

The complex way in which people position themselves in order to maintain autonomy, within the apparently determining limits of broader political and economic forces, became very apparent: people state their position in order to strengthen their hand, and who they are talking to shapes what they talk about.

Peterson had been clearly identified as somebody who was working for those involved in creating the Forest Reserve, he had chosen Tobola as one of his study sites because he had been impressed by the amount of agricultural produce that was always for sale by the side of the dirt road that runs through it. He was seen by local people as someone interested in their agricultural produce, concerned with the 'problem' of immigration into the Ituri, and someone who might provide the opportunity for employment in the conservation centred world of Epulu.

My different position led to a different perspective on the dynamics of social interaction and resource use in this part of the Ituri. When I first arrived in the Nande village of Tobola it was assumed that I would continue with similar research to his: census taking, measuring fields and quantities of produce, working in the fields with the Nande and generally being both sympathetic to their plight and keeping them informed of new conservation moves in Epulu. I stayed several nights in the village, discussing the general insecurity and difficult political situation in Zaire with Nziwa, my generous Nande host. On the one hand the Ituri sous-region seemed to be the most peaceful part of a violently disintegrating state; on the other hand they spoke of receiving threats, with many local people talking of closing down Nande shops in nearby Mambasa and sending them home to Kivu.

In replying to questions on those first evenings, and when I met them in their fields and homes throughout the first few weeks, the Nande would explain that they had come to the Ituri because of the availability of land here, and because of the lack of land back in Kivu. As such, it appeared to be an irreversible step into being committed to the Ituri. Certainly the palm plantation that Nziwa had planted would take many years to bear fruit. Over time it became clear that I did not have any clout in Epulu, and was more interested in gossip about who had returned to Kivu, and who was in conflict with whom, than in measuring the productivity of their fields; people gradually accepted that I was there to learn how the Mbuti lived.

I became a part of Nande daily activities, not by arriving in their fields along the paths that led from the roadside village, but by arriving with often drunk or stoned Mbuti from the

direction of the gold camps. The Mbuti would be keen to sell the gold they had found, or to accompany village friends who were selling gold to the Nande for cash, agricultural produce, tobacco, cannabis, or alcohol. Approaching their lives from this perspective it soon became clear that, for most of the Nande, gold was the major preoccupation and purpose: both economically in the present, and in terms of hopes for the future. They not only ran an economy that depended on creating shambas in order to be able to exchange produce for gold, but for many this gold fuelled their enduring economic and social ties with Kivu. The gold was valuable in itself, but was also vital as a substitute for the rapidly devaluing Zairian currency, sometimes enabling family members in Kivu to buy merchandise in Uganda and Kenya which they would then transport and sell in Zaire. They had neither left Kivu nor remained there, but were part of broader family networks based in Kivu which relied on establishing far reaching trade networks, which were often crucially underpinned by this presence in the Ituri: this source of gold.

Thus my study complements Peterson's not so much by looking at Mbuti rather than Nande experience, but *through seeing both Nande and Mbuti interaction from the perspective of an Mbuti camp rather than a roadside village.* Clearly different sorts of information are made available (and other sorts concealed) depending on where one positions oneself in the field and depending on how one is perceived. The information my position made available suggested that many of the Nande may not see themselves as victims, alienated from their land back home in Kivu, but may see themselves as *expanding their Kivu based kin networks resources;* while many Mbuti, instead of seeing themselves as victims of such incomers' exploitation, are seeking - ultimately unsuccessfully - to *expand their traditional resource base* through exploiting the economic opportunities opened up by these recent incomers.

Arriving at the Mbuti 'gold camp' of Mandimo with Bênoit

Whereas Tobola consists mostly of Nande and other incomers from beyond the forest edge, its neighbouring village of Kilimanwezi consists of Bila and other peoples from within the Ituri Forest area. Each morning Toby, a Ugandan driver settled in Zaire, set off from the Chef de Groupement Dieu Donner's village and drove east through Tobola, Kilimanwezi and Mambasa, to one of the few functioning coffee plantations just the other side of Mambasa. It was owned by a Greek man who managed to keep hold of his plantations during nationalisation by transferring ownership to his Zairian wife. Each morning Dieu Donner would take charge of rounding up enough of 'his pygmies' to work in the coffee plantation. Many Mbuti refused to board the truck because the wages for the morning's work were so low - the equivalent of a single leaf of tobacco. But for others, the

disruption to traditional relations with Bila villagers caused by the depletion of the forest in this area, through the spread of incomers' shambas benefiting from exchanging produce with gold extractors, meant they took whatever opportunities were available. Many, too, seemed eager to come for the ride, and the chance to sing forest songs as they rode high on the back of the truck.

Citoyen Gutambula Bênoit, who met me on my first visit to Kilimanwezi, described himself as "le President Directeur General des mines - residence Mambasa centre". He was 42, a MoKongo from Kinshasa, and the man in control of gold extraction in the surrounding thirty square kilometre area. He took charge of me as I walked out from Kilimanwezi, unsure of the way but heading for the small Mbuti encampment at Mandimo. We paused briefly at the camp, but news had just arrived that the elder sister (the eldest of the siblings who formed the core of the camp) had just died of intestinal infection, arriving at Mambasa hospital too late to be treated. Most of the camp was with her, and it was not the moment to arrive: so I accompanied Bênoit as he visited his gold camps in the forest. His dominating manner involved both browbeating the gold panners into submission and exuding an exuberant charm. I found moving from gold camp to gold camp with him increasingly unbearable. Bênoit told me that he and his family were about to move into the house he had been building a hundred yards from the Mbuti camp at Mandimo, so that the Mbuti could clear huge fields for him to grow produce to supply his gold camps. I thoroughly resented his loud and intrusive style, his power, his desire to take me under his wing, and the idea of his being present so close to the Mbuti camp I intended to stay in.

The resentment had two consequences. The first was that the next day I determinedly set out for Mandimo alone, became lost for hours in the forest, and finally arrived at the camp as the sister's body was being buried, surprising everyone by entering on a forest path rather than on the path that comes through the shambas, and thus giving the totally mistaken impression of having already become at home in the forest. The more important consequence was my realising that Bênoit was part of the picture, and that I had been projecting all my sense of being an intruding powerful outsider onto him. If he was part of the picture then that meant that so was I. Rather than experiencing myself as an observer entering from a different world: I began to see myself as a participant occupying my own peculiar position in this drama; and to see my subjectivity as part of the objective reality, as useful information about the broader picture.

For example, the resentment which I had felt towards Bênoit was itself an expression of conservation's insistence on there being a clear distinction between victim (all nature,

innocent people) and intruder (all humans, or either the powerful or the poor). It was also clear that Bênoit was an immediate part of the picture for those working his concessions and for the Mbuti who were his neighbours at Mandimo. Very little stood between the exploitative forces of the wider world and any local sense of belonging and mutual support between local Bila and Mbuti. There was very little 'give' in the ecological or social system. There were few animals left for the Mbuti to hunt in a forest they were rapidly destroying; and there was little room for long-term reciprocity between the Bila and the Mbuti, as they struggled to survive on a resource base that was rapidly diminishing partly as a result of their willing involvement in the wider world's extraction of gold.

THE NANDE: VICTIMS OR VICTORS?

Refugees from Landlessness or drawn by Gold?

Is it possible for research to establish whether the Nande are the victims of land appropriation back in Kivu, or whether they are expanding their kin groups resource base through establishing a direct way of obtaining wealth and hard currency in the form of gold? Can research reveal such 'facts'? Surely when we are asking such fundamental questions about motivation and autonomy, we are touching on questions of identity which researchers themselves would find hard, or impossible, to answer with any sense of confidence. Nande themselves give differing reasons for their being in the Ituri, and it was through observation and interaction - rather than through their explanations - that I felt I arrived at a clearer picture of their motivation and predicament. Cohen's doubts about being able to answer an informant asking him 'Who are you?' may reflect some of the process that informed Nande answers to my own questions about why they had come to the Ituri:

> What should I say? (i.e. what would it be politic to say?) What can I say? (i.e. what could I say that would be intelligible? Is there an answer which is at once comprehensive and faithful? Do I even know who I am?). (Cohen 1992: 221).

'Pour chercher la vie' was the stock answer from gold panners to the question: what made you come to the Ituri? On their lips 'to search for life' in essence boiled down to the search for gold and the hope for quick wealth. The same phrase spoken by Nande farmers like Paluku at first seemed to mean the opposite. Searching for life on their lips appeared to mean searching for land to establish secure livelihoods; but it became increasingly obvious that most Nande incomers were themselves drawn to the Ituri by the lure of gold.

Case Study: Paluku, a Nande farmer drawn to the Ituri by gold

Paluku lived half way between the road and Mandimo, and was busy expanding his shambas with help from Mbuti labourers. In his eyes Peterson's work had mostly consisted of the long hours he had put into helping him in his fields in order to learn about the daily life of the Nande. In our early conversations - sitting beneath his *barazza* (shaded veranda) overlooking his fields - Paluku would talk of agricultural production, and of the problems that had led to Nande like him moving into the Ituri. These conversations gradually gave way to more informal chance meetings. One day, arriving back at Mandimo with other camp members after a day panning for gold in a stream, I found him sitting beneath the *tele* (barazza) weighing out gold that he was buying from villagers as they stopped for a rest before heading back to their homes by the road. He had never before mentioned gold as being a reason for being in the Ituri; and he greeted me with slight discomfort, though possibly only because he was unused to meeting me here in the Mbuti camp.

Later I asked him how important a part gold played in his economic existence in the Ituri. Instead of answering in the slightly deferential and downtrodden tone he had earlier used in discussing his moving here from Kivu, he replied in an assertive tone. He said that if he gets hold of anywhere between five to ten grammes of gold, then he or his brother takes it to Kivu; to their elder brother in Butembo who owns a lorry, and who uses the gold to buy merchandise in East Africa which they then sell in Zaire. He continued: "The family is building up its security in Butembo, and will return there. If we get thrown out of Haut-Zaire we'll be fine, my economy is there in Butembo, not here".

It had become clear that gold was of pivotal importance, that he saw his shamba as crucial to supporting this extraction, and that in some sense he had never left Kivu.

Most incomers voiced the intention to return 'home' once they had amassed enough wealth; but the reality for most appeared to be that they would return home once they despaired of ever gaining economic or political security. When the Nande spoke in detail of returning home it became clear that, although finding land in Kivu exactly where you might want it might be difficult, there was land if you were willing to settle further away from relatives. Thus the choice to move to the Ituri rather than elsewhere in Kivu could not be solely due to the competition for land in Kivu, but must be involve weighing up strategic options. Options which might include comparing the differing sorts of harassment in Kivu and in the Ituri; and the different economic and political possibilities for strengthening the kin group's position.

Case Study: Travelling 300km to Ituri gold, or 30km to land in Kivu

Muhindo, sick with malaria, complained that Nande such as he were more prone to it, since back home in Kivu it hardly existed. He had come here from Kivu to look for gold but - finding little - took up cultivating. His average earnings from searching for gold had been between one and two grammes a week. He intended to return to Butembo for good, claiming that there was adequate land that had not already been turned into fields, as long as you were willing to live over thirty kilometres from town.

Claims such as this suggested that far from there being no land left in Kivu, the land was there for those willing to live further from their kin.

Nande Land Dispute: Traditional versus National Authority

A dispute between Nande over land demonstrates the way in which conflicting logics can be strengthened rather than resolved through the process of conflict. Referring to Tsing's research in Borneo, Josephides comments that resolutions of conflicts do not as a rule serve a "local sense of cultural logic or justice" (Tsing 1993: 151) because there is never a single agreed upon sense of such logic or justice. However, as Josephides states of her experience of conflict resolution among the Kewa (Josephides 1995), this does not mean that conflicting local logics are not powerfully at work within such disputes.

In the following dispute between two Nande cultivators: one attempts to establish security of land tenure through appealing to the judgement of traditional Bila chiefs, while another seeks to establish his right to the same piece of land by appealing to Zairian national law. The key point is that the same institution - that of the Chef de Groupement - is seen by those above him as representing tradition and by those below him as representing the state; and traditional authority, having been usurped by this corrupt chief, responds to the situation in the same way that state authority traditionally does: by responding to bribery. Thus, though on the surface the argument is between national law and traditional authority, and at this level there is not a single agreed upon sense of logic or justice: in fact there are clearly two opposing logics: that of the all pervasive corrupt state; and that of legitimate traditional authority and the locality. This latter logic is only present as a commentary by local Bila and Mbuti on a dispute between the Nande who are the ones who can afford to manipulate the conflicting logics of corruption.

Case Study: Kamuha, the victory of tradition as authority or as corruption?
Kamuha wanted to give the as yet uncultivated land to the west of the path in Asomani's section to one of his sons to cultivate. Asomani wanted to retain this land - a strip of land across the path from his fields - which he had just begun clearing, and wanted instead for Paluku to give up some of his land to Kamuha's son. But Kamuha objected since it was he who was given permission to cultivate this whole stretch of forest by the local Bila chief, after paying him a small amount. Kamuha then claimed that he only let Asomani, a friend of his from Kivu, settle temporarily on his land prior to finding his own "terrain".

Paying BaBila for land is traditional but illegal. On that basis Azomani claimed the government owned all the land and that therefore it is for whoever works it. Kamuha said "Take me to whatever authority you like, accuse me anywhere, but don't work that land in the meantime." The local chief was as high as Azomani felt he could afford to go. So the Kilimanwezi Bila chief, ex chief, and many other local Bila worthies, were called in to settle the dispute. The traditional local chief, of course, upheld traditional claims and decided in favour of Kamuha, but not before a lot of drink was drunk.

Azomani took the dispute to the higher authorities in Mambasa: bringing the relevant administrator - the supervisor of the environment - the twelve kilometres out from Mambasa to reach his judgement on the spot. Azomani had to slip two million zaires into the supervisor's pocket regularly; to demonstrate that it would be worthwhile making the journey. But the supervisor knew he would anger the Chef de Groupement, Dieu Donner, if he settled the dispute himself, so he took eight million zaires from both disputants for having made the journey and left it to Dieu Donner to decide.

As Tsing states for the Meratus Dayaks of South Kalimantan in Borneo, state officials (such as this supervisor) tend to take as traditional institutions what villagers often regard as state ones (Tsing 1993: 26). Dieu Donner is a case in point since although officially he is at the highest level of traditional authority, and above him the different levels of the administration are appointed by the state, his authority in fact appears to rest on his ability to mobilise state power in the form of the military at Mambasa.

In the context of the incoming Nande, however, Dieu Donner represents traditional authority. Failing to persuade a higher representative of state law to settle the dispute in his favour, on the basis that the forest does not belong to anyone but the state; Azomani lost the arguments concerning traditional ownership in the context of the Bila chef de

groupement. For, in this context, all the land is first and foremost Dieu Donner's, then the local chief's and finally Kamuha's, since he had originally paid the local chief for it.

Azomani had to pay fifteen million zaires to Dieu Donner and pay Kamuha the eight million zaires he had paid to the supervisor. Thus after nine weeks, forty million zaires[9] and the cost of much drink, the dispute was settled. Should Azomani be unable to pay he would be put in jail, which would mean that Dieu Donner could use him as free labour, alongside the other prisoners he has ensnared under various pretexts, to help cut down the forest and enlarge his fields.

Although in this context he portrayed himself as representing tradition, Dieu Donner's legitimacy is denied by most Bila and Mbuti who accuse him of having bribed the administration to enable him to usurp Batomine, his predecessor and the man most Bila and Mbuti recognise as the legitimate chief. Thus in a sense he represents the administration rather than tradition, and in most contexts he does this efficiently by fulfilling what is arguably the most important tradition of the administration: exploiting discord for personal advantage.

Contradictory beliefs concerning Catholicism, cannibalism and sorcery

A Nande can call on the legitimising authority of the state in order to assert his right to live anywhere in Zaire, and in order to assert that land ownership depends on productive use. At the same time, Janet MacGaffey (1986) demonstrates that such Nande are highly effective traders because they rely on credit made possible by the solidarity of kin networks. The repositioning of identity according to circumstance is nothing new in anthropology, but there appears to be a specific tone amongst the Nande, since their economic success appears to rely on knowing when to assert traditional authority, and when to assert the rules of a modern nation state. This sense of dual identity is evident not simply in economic interaction, but in conflicting internal beliefs concerning cosmology and rationality.

Beliefs concerning religion, sorcery and cannibalism are a good example of this. On the one hand the accusation of cannibalism, in the case study below, is an attempt to demonstrate that the Bila are "terrible animals"; on the other hand it expresses a fear about living in the midst of people who have a prior right to the land and to power. This was particularly true during my fieldwork period, when the emphasis on being a Zairian entitled

9 One dollar was worth 3 million zaires during this fieldwork period. One small antelope cost 5 million zaires. Ten years earlier one dollar was worth between 14 and 36 zaires (Wæhle 1989: xv)

to settle anywhere, was being challenged by the fragmented opposition whose growing power lay in the resurgence of localities and of traditional beliefs.

Case Study: Venance, caught between cannibalism and Catholicism

Venance, a Nande farmer living near Mandimo, ridiculed the Bila for being so gullible as to believe in sorcery and witchcraft; and promptly went on to describe various instances of bewitching that he had witnessed among the Nande back in Kivu. He described how, when his sister was little, a sorcerer put a spell on her, and that on her wrist they found a human bite mark. They went to another sorcerer who managed to discover the 'bad' sorcerer who was then never seen again. Realising the contradiction between his strong Catholic beliefs (which caused him to discount Bila belief in witchcraft as primitive superstition) and these stories, he said that maybe only two in one thousand African Catholics would go to heaven. He then went on to assert that he and other Nande can kill at a distance by thought alone; and then that the Bila are terrible sorcerers and cannibals. As proof of this he told me the story of a Bila man who was eaten by another Bila who was caught with a leg in his hand.

While being a devout Catholic, and claiming to hold the nkumbi circumcision ritual of the Bila and the Mbuti in contempt, Venance also regretted the fact that the Nande no longer held their own circumcision rituals. He explained that the Nande used to hold nkumbis in Kivu. After the Belgians arrived and the Nande converted to Christianity, the missionaries would excommunicate or imprison whole villages for holding such rituals. Venance said "the traditions also have strength: they can make people well"; but he quickly added that with the Bila it is sometimes humans who are sacrificed in their rituals. He was clearly trying to find a way to reconcile his deeply held Catholicism, and his awareness of the strength of a tradition which his Catholicism has denied him.

An underlying theme connects Nande descriptions of their economy, identity, and cosmology. They sometimes position themselves as entrepreneurs and sometimes as victims; likewise, as Christians they condemn the superstitious practices and beliefs of the locals they are supplanting, while as Nande they can see themselves as victims of the destruction of their traditions by the colonial missionaries. This is not simply a matter of recognising the way in which people use different appearances to advance, conceal, defend, undermine and shape their own and other people's realities. It is also a matter of recognising a fundamental conflict between a sense of belonging rooted in place, and an attitude of extraction rooted in a combination of dispossession and opportunism. These can be differentiated as being the contrast between standing within the long-term consequences,

strengths and difficulties of a situation, and standing outside the situation in order to seize short-term gain from it.

To the extent that Nande are in the Ituri in order to acquire gold, they are outsiders fuelling the destruction of the forest (and of Bila and Mbuti subsistence which relies on the forest) and as such represent the cutting edge of external extractive forces rather than genuine local needs. There are Nande who would choose to stay even if gold panning ceased - Nande like Nziwa with his palm plantation at Tobola, and Jean who has married into the Bila village of Utama. Their long-term commitment to the Ituri represents genuine local needs which are intimately bound up in local relations including the forest itself. In all probability, if gold panning was effectively halted in the Ituri, many Nande would return to Kivu and few more would arrive. For, without the added attraction of gold, it would be preferable to create fields on land only 30 kilometres from their kin in Kivu, rather than clear forest 300 kilometres from home.

Thus, rather than dealing with ethnicities, it is more helpful to examine the contradictory practices and beliefs at the level of the individual, and put policies in place which serve everyone's long-term interests by drastically reducing the opportunities for people to become involved in making a short-term profit from long-term destruction. This is an approach which applies as much to the Mbuti, as to the Bila, the Nande, and of course to the *wazungu* (whites) at Epulu who are busy putting conservation plans into place. Their role does not provide them with a place outside the situation from which they can impose plans on local people, for the same question applies to these conservationists as to everyone else. Is their involvement motivated by the long-term interests of the locality? Or is it simply intended to extract short-term research information, rare species, nature film footage, or conservation prestige, through a process which further alienates local people from a sustainable relationship with each other and their environment? Any analysis of the Nande's situation needs to acknowledge that the questions which apply to them apply to everyone, and that it is inaccurate to scapegoat or absolve any one group, including the most obviously destructive one - the gold panners themselves.

THE DYNAMICS OF GOLD EXTRACTION

Most of those digging for gold were not so much exploiting the situation as suffering under an illusion. Meanwhile, Bênoit was one amongst many who cursed an oppressive president while also emulating him. The control Bênoit exerted over the lives of the gold extractors - through combining the threat and use of force, and the promise of illusory

wealth - bore a strong resemblance to the power exerted by Mobutu: a resemblance that was far from coincidental.

Bênoit exacted a weekly tithe of two *tige* (one sixth of a gramme) of gold, or the reluctant promise of one days *salonga* (hard labour) digging out the mud at his 'mine' *Kinshasa*, from the workers at his carriers; workers who were almost all already heavily in debt to him. The supply of goods to these gold camps was controlled by Bênoit - who sold palm oil, fish, rice, manioc, and other basic goods to the workers at twice Mambasa's prices. He paid the person transporting the goods ten per cent of the price, which made Bênoit's cut forty per cent. This system allowed Bênoit to profit twice over: at this end from selling them provisions at twice their price in Mambasa; and at the other end in Kivu by selling this same gold at a far higher price than he buys it from his workers for.

Case Study: Carriere Magugu,
At this small gold camp the seven workers had together found less than 2 grammes worth of gold; while the total amount of provisions they had bought from Bênoit amounted to close on 2 grammes. The *responsable* representing the camp argued with Bênoit that the prices of transported goods was far too high since after they had given him all the gold they had found, they would still owe him money. Bênoit had no sympathy for their plight since his wealth was so directly related to their poverty. He won the argument with the responsable by verbally battering him into silence. This was followed by Bênoit being given a delicious carrot and mushroom stew, for although they had lost the argument they were still dependent on him; and his flamboyant and humorous way of proclaiming how wealthy everybody would be as soon as they struck gold had an infectious ability to quicken hope, however illusory, in those around him.

Bênoit's tone was an imitation of Mobutu's populist humour, and of Mobutu's ability to catch the public mood and express it in the pithy clever phrases Zairians delight in. For example, rather than addressing the severe social and economic difficulties that had lead to professors and farmers coming to the Ituri to search for gold, Mobutu chose to describe his fellow countrymen digging for gold and diamonds in an amusing, convivial and intimate way: *maintenant recreation, nous pouvrons être serious plus tard:* 'now [we indulge in] recreation, we can be serious later'. A conviviality which draws Zairians into complicity in accepting their impoverished state (see Mbembe 1992: 25-29), as was evident in the laughing response of a Nande man to another's anger at Mobutu's wealth: *mais les Zairoises, nous tous sont les voleurs!* However the same humour can also express resistance, as in Nziwa's wry comment that *le pays est riche, mais les paysants sont*

pauvres. But beneath the masquerade of French phrases used by Nande and gold panners, was the oft repeated Swahili word *vumilia* meaning simply to endure, to suffer with patience. The same heaviness and hunger which accompanied this word in the gold camps and plantations, was present among the Mbuti of Mandimo, but their favoured response was to call out *kimya, kimya tu noko:* a mixture of Swahili and Kimbuti calling for calm and silence, for peacefulness, and addressed to a real or imaginary brother- or sister-in-law, and thus to all the forces they were 'marrying into' by placing themselves in the path of gold extraction and shamba creation.

Bênoit's mesmerising grandiosity, combined with a brutal use of force, was little different to Mobutu's. His right to control the gold panning in this 30 square kilometres concession - with no regard for the local people's prior ownership - can be seen as a local replication of the large concessions granted to Belgian rubber companies under Belgian rule, and to European logging companies under Mobutu. Thus the exercise of power by Bênoit at the local level was simply a replication of the power which political and economic forces have exerted, both under colonialism and today in what Mbembe terms the 'postcolony'.

Case Study: Placid obedience and Mr Kurtz

At the larger gold camp of *Congoa* Placid, a large quiet youth from Kinshasa, told me that "the forest gives us everything": the oil-rich sour *mbele* fruit, cola nuts, big mushrooms, caterpillars, meat, *bombe* fruit, and of course gold. His manner and appreciation of the forest was totally at odds with Bênoit's grandiose claims that he would turn all the forest into fields with which he could supply the gold camps and Mambasa. Like a modern day Mr Kurtz, Bênoit's conversation was always of his own greatness, of how well he helped others and how little he asked in return. He claimed to have given Placid money for nothing, just because Placid was desperate. But then he asked Placid to haul great quantities of manioc sticks many miles through the forest, day after day, to plant in his expanding fields; and Placid, being good natured and grateful, continued doing so for a long while before finally recognising he was being badly treated. Bênoit worked hard to make others stay within the spell of greatness he continually: the spell of gold.

The spell required constant story telling to retain its allure. However, on the rare occasion when someone did strike lucky, they would immediately turn from searching for gold to an occupation with a measure of security. Bênoit told of a 'friend' who had found 1, 500 grammes worth of gold, and who immediately established a shamba and opened a shop: abandoning the illusion, just when it had taken on a momentary transient reality. For there was a far higher chance of dying in the search than striking anywhere near this lucky.

Plate 1. **Mbuti Gold Panner Holding a 'Leaf of gold'**

Plate 2. **The entrance to Kinshasa 'mine' before the collapse**

Case Study: The collapse of 'Kinshasa'

Like Mobutu renaming the Congo 'Zaire', Bênoit laid claim to the land by renaming it according to his own whim, and his greatest hopes lay in a deep and narrow 'mine' that was being dug down into the hill beside a large stream he had renamed after his home town: *Kinshasa*. This Kinshasa mine later collapsed, falling in on the workers who had cut a long way into the muddy hillside searching for gold by candlelight. Bênoit claimed that he told them that it was dangerous, although he was doing nothing but encouraging to them when I was there. When the roof fell in: one man suffocated instantly, and the other two were carried to the hospital near Mambasa.

According to Zairian law, Bênoit was responsible for the man's death, and should have paid his family compensation, but through bribing the right official he was able to claim that the man's name was not on his list of workers, and was therefore a thief since he should not have been working in the mine. As a result three gendarmes from Mambasa arrived at the home of the dead man's family and confiscated two goats and one hen from them as punishment for the dead man's supposed misdemeanour.

When I complained to Venance and others at the injustice of it they explained that "we are still living Mobutu's Zaire". In their eyes Bênoit was simply emulating Mobutu; and they told me of the time when the chef de groupement, Dieu Donner, had fined the family of a suicide who had hung himself from a tree behind a neighbour's house. Dieu Donner had then fined the family who owned the field in which the tree stood, and finally he fined the family who owned the field through which the man walked to reach the tree.

The very audacity of the injustices Bênoit or Mobutu perpetrate would appear to be part of a way of surrounding the brute exercise of force with the mystique of being beyond morality: being in the same realm of inexplicable charisma as the grandiose claims which are also their hallmark.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE MBUTI

In the short-term, the Mbuti at Mandimo were often able to come off best in a situation in which they appeared to simply be being exploited. However, in the long-term their nutrition, health and social well-being - as well as their relationship with their Bila neighbours - was severely undermined by their involvement in gold extraction and the creation of the large shambas which gold extraction relies on.

Relations between Bênoit and the Mbuti

Bênoit's attitude towards the Mbuti, like the colonial authorities' attitude to Africans in general, was to see them as needing to be civilised through their being made to work for him. He saw himself as vastly superior to the Mbuti, and able to make them work for him for next to nothing: "the Pygmies come to work for me: I send them in to clear the field, then give them some manioc or plantain. It is important to be separate from them, not to socialise, or you'll be seen as equal". As a consequence Bênoit's small son was lonely since Bênoit would not let him play with the Mbuti children. However, over time it was not only his son but also his two wives who ignored his orders and spent much time visiting the camp and making friends with the Mbuti.

Bênoit, like the Nande, expressed an ambivalent attitude towards the Bila. On the one hand seeing them as relatively powerful because this is their region: their sorcery is feared, they are the ones from whom permission must traditionally be sought to clear the forest, and who might throw incomers out of the region. Some are seen as powerful for being educated and well connected within the state machinery and able, like Dieu Donner, to use the gendarmes to impose their will and settle disputes in their favour. On the other hand the Bila are also seen as being backward and ignorant; as being too close to - or even dependent on - the Mbuti. Bênoit told me that unlike the Bila, who eat from the hands of 'Pygmies' and so are practically 'Pygmies' themselves, he feeds *them* in return for their working for *him*. The worst accusation that Bênoit levelled against Batomine - the Bila chief usurped by Dieu Donner - was that he practically lived with the Mbuti and so did not deserve his position.

Bênoit's attitude of ownership and superiority to the Mbuti was quite explicit. When I first arrived, he described two old Mbuti men, whom he was employing as being "my Pygmies", before adding: "Pygmies have a mentality half animal, half human". He saw himself as helping to raise them from this backward state into being useful workers, able to engage in independent economic interactions. The accusation of being animal-like fitted not only with this stated wish, but also with his attempted exploitation of them, and the occasional, open, stealing from them that this involved. It is reminiscent not only of Belgian paternalism but also of Bila attitudes to Mbuti, and Mbuti attitudes to villagers, as described by Colin Turnbull:

> A pygmy thinks nothing of stealing from negroes; they are, after all, only animals . . . as seen by pygmy eyes (1961: 111).

Bênoit claimed that "these Pygmies never think about tomorrow, or remember yesterday" and, while professing to regret the 'fact' that the Mbuti did not appear to plan for

tomorrow, Bênoit seemed to think he could take advantage of it. However, far from being a 'fact' about their 'primitive' mentality - as Bênoit saw it - this apparent present-centredness was a useful ploy with outsiders, and an essential prerequisite for demand sharing within the camp. In camp the endless demands quickly shared out whatever was seen as surplus; while in relation to an outsider like myself or Bênoit the demands were insatiable, and any gift carried no obligation over time since, as Bênoit put it, "if you give them lots today, they'll still want more tomorrow". Once, after listening to Bênoit's view of his neighbouring Mbuti, I returned to camp to see the eldest brother in camp, Njobo, collect some orange pips I had thrown away, and dig them into the ground nearby. Apparent present-centredness represents just one opportunistic coping strategy, planting seeds represents another.

In relation to Bênoit they behaved in a very present-centred way which meant that whatever they had been given yesterday put them under no obligation to him today. Bênoit explained this away by saying that they "have a mentality half animal, half human", and was thus able to assert his superiority and hide from himself the fact that with the Mbuti - unlike with the gold panners and the villagers - he was often getting the worst end of the deal.

Impact of gold on Mbuti - Bila relations

Even in this context of rapid forest destruction many of the Bila villagers maintained a traditional cycle. Just as at Utama in the central Ituri where the forest is not being destroyed many Bila will spend long periods in the forest at fishing camps, or in Mbuti hunting camps, and their cycle of movement from village to forest and back lasts days, weeks or even months; so here the Bila enter the forest daily, returning every evening to their homes near the road. The cyclical movement, central to Bila and Mbuti life, is here foreshortened into a daily cycle since the forest is being destroyed, and there are no Mbuti hunting camps, except for camps such as Mandimo where there is little to hunt except gold.

Every morning, a group of Bila from Kilimanwezi would make their way to Mandimo, using forest paths rather than paths through Nande fields wherever possible. Panning for gold offered the only way of continuing their traditional strategy of both working their fields and spending periods engaging in exchange with the Mbuti and the forest. In an attempt to assert their traditional rights to Bila prior ownership of the forest, they refused to take their place alongside the incomers in Bênoit's carrières, even in the face of Bênoit insisting that they should not be digging anywhere without his permission. But their attempt to maintain traditional relations with the Mbuti and the forest was fast being

undermined by the destruction of the forest and the extent to which Bênoit was able to alienate the Mbuti from them.

In all there were three main Mbuti camps associated with the Bila village of Kilimanwezi. Whereas the Mbuti at Mandimo were very much dependent on Bênoit's hand outs of cannabis, the camp near the Nande Mbale's 'bar' was motivated to work in Nande fields, or to collect forest products for them, through offers of the fierce alcohol Mbale could make available to them. The third camp was near to Joche's large shamba. Joche was a Bila man and provided the Mbuti in his camp with garden produce in exchange for their going far into the forest to hunt for meat with their nets. Out of the three camps it was clear that Joche's was the wealthiest - in terms of nutrition, health, numbers and in retaining it's members - probably because its material exchange concentrated on food, and its social world revolved around singing (rather than cannabis or alcohol). The Mbuti here relied on traditional exchange and friendships with Bila villagers, rather than on unstable relationships based on mutual short-term exploitation.

One of the Mbuti woman at Mandimo was married to Basa, a villager who lived much of the time with the Mbuti in camp. Another Bila sent his son to relations elsewhere in the Ituri so that he could undergo the nkumbi initiation, the circumcision ceremony that in many ways unites all those who identify themselves as belonging to the Ituri. Here the nkumbi was no longer held because it requires not only Bila-Mbuti relations, but also an area of forest, that is undisturbed. Often Mbuti from the camp would accompany the Bila for a day spent digging in the streams nearby searching for gold. In the light of the way in which the Bila and Mbuti were closely linked through shared beliefs, history and friendship, Bênoit's success in driving a wedge between them was all the more poignant.

Case Study: The destruction of Mbuti - Bila friendship

Alimasi Njobo was the elder brother of the small camp at Mandimo, which consisted of twenty adults and children. One morning Bênoit shouted to Njobo to come and see him, and Njobo quickly walked over to Bênoit's new home. In return for tobacco and cannabis Njobo put two long sticks across the path, barring the way down to the stream which the local Bila would that morning return to continue working for gold. Bênoit's purpose was to force the Bila to do salonga (labour in lieu of tax) for him instead.

When the Bila arrived, Njobo greeted them a bit too enthusiastically before telling them that they had to see Bênoit. Njobo and his younger brother Alubé were busy digging out the weeds from the camp: and 'just happened' to be blocking the path to the stream. Njobo

was clearly enjoying calling to the influx of gold searchers sitting unhappily in the camp that 'sadly' they would have to go and see the PDG, Bênoit. The eight youngest turned round and headed back as if to Kilimanwezi. Njobo gave them a stern lecture on the matter: while Alubé and his brother-in-law Akotu were enjoying themselves watching the proceedings. The other four stayed and complained after having been to speak to the PDG. Finally Bênoit arrived and took them all to do salonga for him.

The Mbuti in camp were pleased that the villagers were being ordered around while they remained not only free but also benefited with tobacco and cannabis and the chance to assert their power. Although the previous day Bênoit had harangued the camp, saying that all at Mandimo would do salonga for him; this had turned out not to include any of the Mbuti, just the villagers. Or at least most of the villagers: the other eight youngsters didn't return to Kilimanwezi but to the river just short of Mandimo and continued to pan for themselves, postponing the day of salonga, and increasing the fury of Bênoit's wrath that would one day come down on them.

The power the Mbuti enjoyed in this situation was a way of turning the extractive forces to their advantage, and by so doing they came to embody those forces themselves. In the long term the small camp was broken up and dispersed by the illness and death which resulted from spending the proceeds of gold panning on drink and cannabis, and an occasional fake gold necklace from the roadside store.

Unlike the camp near Joche's shamba where the focus was on net hunting, on singing, and on exchanging meat for village garden produce; the break up of Mandimo suggests that their temporary enjoyment in exploiting the extraction of gold - and their advantageous position relative to their Bila friends - could never provide a viable long-term future.

Mbuti ill-health and the break up of the camp

Those involved in gold panning in the camp divided the money their gold had fetched between them, and they separately bought what they wanted. When the camp was not preoccupied with acquiring cannabis, they might buy palm oil, fish, salt, and manioc. So, while sharing their 'profit' equally, they spent their money separately, but then consumed whatever had been bought collectively. Cooking at family fires, the food would then be brought to the different huts, with families tending to eat together, the unmarried men and boys eating together, and on occasion the men all eating together under the 'veranda'.

The central Mbuti values of sharing and of identification with the forest are simultaneously tenacious and vulnerable to attrition. The sharing of collectively 'hunted' or 'gathered' gold is combined with individual spending in the same way that meat in a hunting camp is collectively hunted and then divided between individuals. On the other hand, at Mandimo there was no opportunity to collectively net hunt and no focus on producing social harmony through singing. In fact most issues were dealt with by the only permanent elder in camp, Njobo's mother, and her hectoring style was not designed to restore harmony but to achieve submission. Significantly, when two visiting women arrived and sang in the traditional Mbuti way to make a death good, their singing had, at first, to battle with one of her long lectures. The fact that they outsung her hectoring seemed reason enough for the lifting of spirits which followed.

Case Study: Mbuti afterlife, from hospital to forest

The singing had followed the death of the elder sister who had died in hospital and had been carried back to Mandimo to be buried. The process involved bringing her back from the scientific medical belief system of the hospital; then burying her nearby while villagers read Christian prayers; which was followed by the wailing of her husband Tito and others. It was a sustained wailing night after night which is more common in villages than in Mbuti forest camps. After a few weeks his two female relatives - from Tito's original camp, much further west into the forest - arrived and moved the wailing into song. This singing, that is so central in most Mbuti forest camps, had been absent in this camp that was within earshot of Bênoit's new home.

Throughout the night the women sang of what had happened that day, of sad occasions and deaths, and sang of the Ituri river and finally of the Ituri Forest itself. The next day we all bathed in the stream, and in the smoke of branches we had carried into camp from the forest, and everyone - even Tito - ate together: most of the men in the tele, and the women and children and some of the men in front of the huts. This marked the end of Tito's wailing and the start of his reintegration into the group, before he returned with the two singers to his own camp.

The death of Njobo's sister was made well not by the camp itself, but by the intervention of Mbuti from a camp which was still involved in net hunting and singing, in a part of the forest that was not devastated. In a sense the two women brought harmony by bringing the forest into the camp, something which the Mbuti at Mandimo were no longer capable of doing because they lacked the everyday experience of hunting, moving through, and so knowing, the forest (Ingold 1994b). Likewise, although money, once divided, was often

spent on food; there were many times when it was spent on cannabis, alcohol and trinkets, and when people would work in order to acquire luxury items which were made readily available by incomers, and which replaced rather than supplemented subsistence items.

When camp members cut vines and saplings, or collected bundles of mongongo roofing leaves, to exchange with a Nande house builder; a large part of their payment might well be in alcohol or cannabis. The proportion of deaths, and very severe illnesses in the camp was far higher than in Mbuti hunting camps in the forest south of Utama.

The high incidence of illness appeared to be related not simply to inadequate nutrition, but also to a level of social disharmony that became evident in the explanations people gave for the break up of the camp. A brother-in-law of Njobo became very ill in camp, and blamed his illness on Njobo's mother. The fact that he recovered as soon as they moved elsewhere, confirmed his belief that the mother's sorcery was the source of his dis-ease and illness, and his family never returned to Mandimo.

Njobo had twice shown me Giri-giri (magical medicine) that was hanging by the side of the path to ward off thieves from a Nande field. The first time he had laughed and joked about it as being powerless; the second time he had quickly stopped me from touching it out of concern for the consequences. The second occasion was during a period of illness in the camp that was being attributed to sorcery. When there was no dis-ease or disharmony to account for, bottles of magical medicine were laughable, but when surrounded by misfortune, Njobo's fear conveyed his uncertainty about the possibility of the Mbuti camp remaining whole in the face of being surrounded by the powerful forces unleashed by the Nande.

Fear of sorcery was the language within which the break up of the camp at Mandimo was expressed. Njobo only returned to Mandimo once after his wife's baby died. And soon only one of his brothers remained at Mandimo with their mother, all the rest, including the brothers wife, having left. Their mother was blamed for the death of Njobo's baby, and Bênoit was eager to support their stories of the old woman's sorcery. He had every interest in blaming the ill health and break up of the camp on reasons internal to the camp. For it would not have helped him in persuading people to continue trying their luck at searching for gold, if he had had to admit that the consequences for these searchers had been so destructive.

Although sorcery fears and accusations were the language within which this dispersion occurred, the underlying reason for the break up appeared to be due to the illness and dislocation - and the dependency on Bênoit's exploitation - caused by their abandoning their relationship with the forest and their Bila neighbours in an attempt to benefit from becoming a part of the forces destroying the forest.

BEYOND MANDIMO? THE BAKA OF CAMEROUN

After Mandimo had broken up, some members of the camp moved to positions of even greater dependency on incomers - for example, moving to be near one of Mambasa's missionary hospitals; others moved to the Mbuti camp near Joche, or to other camps where the net hunt and singing was equally strong and the food supply reliable. These two responses clearly demonstrate the nature of the options available, not only for the Mbuti but also for the Baka in Cameroun. In Cameroun both deforestation and the involvement of the Baka hunter-gathers in forest destruction, is much more intense; and the situation there highlights the likely long-term impact of the forces at work in the Ituri Forest.

There are powerful external forces at work drawing the Baka and their farming neighbours into the process of destroying their forest (Joiris 1991). European owned logging companies control huge concessions, the vast majority of their labour force coming from other regions of Cameroun, regions to which they return once their labour is no longer required. The companies cut only the most valuable species, but their roads and network of feeder tracks decimate the forest and open it to other outsiders who come to extract huge quantities of valuable bushmeat and ivory. Baka forest skills are now at the cutting edge of this destructive process. Logging companies employ a few Baka from the area they are currently exploiting to search out the best timber, and then sack them when they move on to a new concession. Safari hunters employ Baka to track big game for their European clients; bushmeat traders loan them hundreds of metal snares to set in the best places. Both Baka and their neighbouring village farmers such as the Bangandou, are heavily involved in providing the logging camps with meat and garden produce.

On the insistence of the World Bank, which has helped fund much of the logging, an area where the most valuable timber has already been logged has been set aside to become a national park. The proposed park is in an area reasonably far from any permanent settlements. When WWF/WCS representatives asked the nearest Baka and Bangandou whether they would accept being forbidden entry to this conservation area: they were willing to agree, on condition that they be granted an area around their communities that

would be free of loggers, safari hunters and bushmeat traders; that would be theirs to manage (Curran 1993). The Camerounian government looks unlikely to agree to even this meagre demand in the absence of any pressure from overseas; pressure that is all too evident in the demands for timber, nature conservation, and development.

Perhaps this paralysis of response from people in the West is in large part the consequence of our inability to see people such as the Baka or Mbuti clearly. One view of them, as timeless hunter-gatherers existing in a separate world, is expressed by Korina Horta in the Ecologist: "The Baka are the experts of the forest and know how to extract resources from it without disturbing its delicate balance" (1991: 143). While this is undoubtedly true, she makes no mention of their involvement in the process of forest destruction. In this picture they are seen as living in a state of grace that will inevitably disappear if it comes into contact with the West.

The other Western view is conveyed in Eugene Linden's article in Time magazine about a sister national park over the border in Congo, which excludes any human habitation. In the article he portrays his Aka hunter-gatherer guides as "inebriated . . . pygmies". "Building a road?", he quotes them as saying, "Great! Pay us well, and we'll build it for you"(1992: 55). In the article we are allowed to assume that throughout the world all other values will inevitably be discarded in the pursuit of money. Linden describes the forest as 'virgin', needing to be kept pure of human involvement. According to this view, once entered into and lived in by humans, it will no longer be 'virgin': there is no going back, there is no sense of a relationship. We can protect the purity of some parts of the environment, the rest we will just use. In Linden's words: 'the strong arm of the World Bank' is necessary to protect the forest that is 'innocent of humans' (1992: 54). In this perspective hunter-gatherers like the Baka are seen as a marginalised group whose culture has largely fragmented, whose economic activity threatens its environment, and who are in need of development opportunities to pull themselves up to a reasonable material level of security, and to divert them from their now destructive involvement to the forest,.

Pursuing this second view, the government's sedentarisation policy, implemented by missionaries and development agencies, has actively encouraged the Baka to settle by the road and turn to farming (Hewlett 1993). This policy had been fuelled by the government's desire to get rid of what it sees as the most 'backward' people in its modern state; and to be able to levy taxes on, and have some control over, such a mobile people. Mission hospitals, schools and the chance to benefit, however briefly, from taking part in the outsiders' extractive economy draw the Baka to the roadside. The assumption is that the

Baka need to be helped to be independent of their farming neighbours by becoming independent roadside cultivators themselves. This sets them in opposition to their Bangandou farming neighbours with whom they otherwise share a relationship of complimentarity; whether in the ritual exchange of the Beka circumcision, or in the exchange of garden produce for forest produce or labour. The Baka social security system of having to share any visible excess (Dodd 1980), which works well within the day to day world of foraging in the forest and working in Bangandou gardens, breaks down amid the accumulation and structured planning necessary in farming. Put in conflict with their neighbours, denied access to their independent resource base - which is the context for the spiritual beliefs and practice which underpin the economy of sharing - they are marginalised from a way of life where they are the experts, and many attempt to put whatever remains of their expertise to use in working for loggers, safari hunters and bushmeat traders.

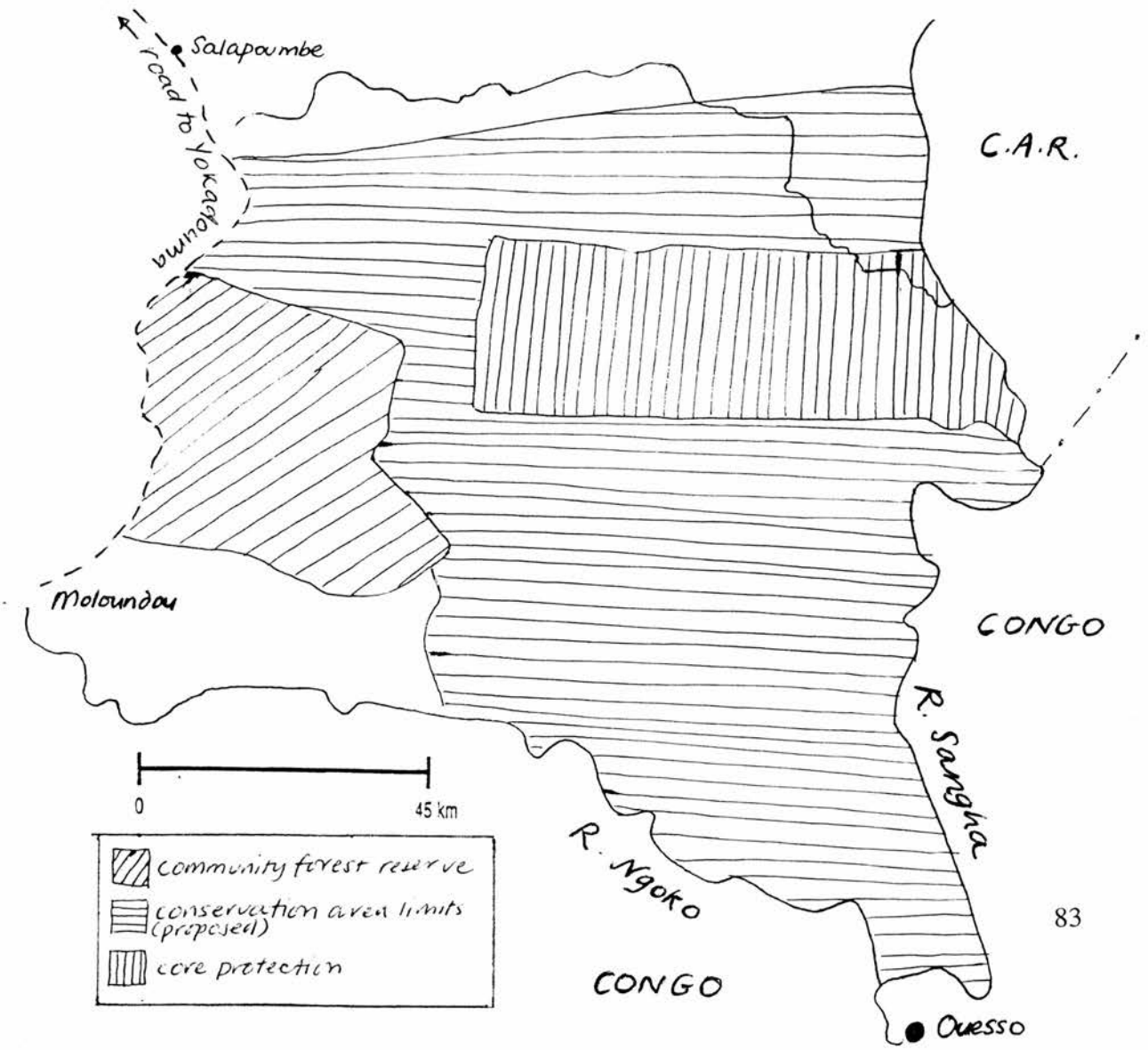
The Baka with whom I was living initially attempted to establish themselves permanently at the roadside. The harassment by authorities seeking tax, villagers' demands, the heat and jiggers, the breakdown of their social relations, had left them no choice but to either become subsumed as part of the mission settlements or logging camps, or to retreat from the roadside. Settling permanently by the roadside would involve depending on farming, missionaries, or logging camps, and would mean abandoning the mobility and cultural flexibility which characterises their semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer way of thinking and relating, just as it characterises many other hunter-gatherers' existence (Kent 1996: 12-13). While seeking to exploit roadside developments for short-term gain, the cultural flexibility involved was being stretched to breaking point, and these Baka had retreated a few hours walk into the forest, where they had established semi-permanent camps next to their own small plantations. Finding a mid-point allowed them to reach their own balance between the forest and the road: enabling mobility, sharing and identification with the forest to remain at the centre of their lives, while negotiating the advantages and pressures of the roadside world. The Beka circumcision festival of the Baka and Bangandou is one such context for the two groups' identities and relationships to be negotiated. Establishing a mid-point appears to be a widespread response wherever the forest and Baka social experience has not been too devastated.

However, conservation is in danger of joining logging companies, missionaries and development agencies in further marginalising the Baka from sustainable subsistence activity, by attempting to restrain their involvement in the forest. Even in the unlikely event that local people gain the right to manage an area nearer the road in exchange for absolute

exclusion from conservation areas; the emphasis continues to be on shifting the focus to the road, to development projects, to change as defined by external agencies and beliefs. Conservation in Cameroun could instead value forest skills and involvement, and - while working to remove the transient destructive external forces - support local communities in deepening their long-term involvement in their environment through returning to them real control and decision making.

Having examined the process of deforestation at Mandimo, this brief survey of the situation in Cameroun is a stark reminder of one possible future for the Ituri. Having examined the ways in which people become caught up in the process of extracting short-term benefit from the destruction of their long-term ecological and social subsistence base, the following chapters examine the relationship between the Mbuti, the Bila, and the forest in the heart of the Ituri where forest devastation is absent. Only after gaining a clear perspective on this will it be possible to consider the possibility of arriving at sustainable conservation in the Ituri.

Fig. 5. The Proposed Conservation Area in South East Cameroun



PART III: FOREST

CHAPTER 5 MBUTI HUNTING CAMPS: Exchange relations with the Bila and incomers

This chapter analyses present day relations between Mbuti and villagers in the context of the hunting camps, and the way in which the economic exchange embedded in these relations enables - rather than disrupts - Mbuti life in the forest. The context of this analysis is the debate concerning whether hunter-gatherers can live independently of farmers in the tropical rainforest, and the question of whether contact must mean dependency.

ECOLOGICALLY ENDURING, HISTORICALLY CHANGING RELATIONS

With central government weak or non-existent, economic relations between Mbuti and villagers today are not shaped by the constant tax demands and plantation work endured under colonisation, but are mediated through the meat trade. Village traders spend long periods of time in Mbuti hunting camps exchanging trade items and produce from their fields, for antelope hunted by the Mbuti. The traders success often depends on how intimate and personal their relationship is with the Mbuti in camp; and this system, whereby everything which the Mbuti cannot obtain from the forest is transported in by traders, enables the Mbuti to stay in the forest for very long periods of time.

This contrasts sharply with the Mbuti/Bila relationship under Belgian rule, a relationship largely shaped by the Bila's desperate need for Mbuti labour in their cotton plantations to meet tax demands, and by Mbuti refusal to be drawn into this subservient role. Those Bila chiefs who were desperate to control Mbuti labour to help harvest cotton, were unable to find and control them; whereas those chiefs who maintained traditional relations of autonomy had no such difficulty (Turnbull 1965: 41). Meanwhile less 'important' villagers succeeded in securing Mbuti support and help "because the relationship was more intimate and personal" (1965: 41). Turnbull continues: "It is not infrequent for a strong attachment to grow between the villagers and Mbuti, and in such cases the economic exchange is much more balanced. In all other cases there can be no doubt that the Mbuti, with less necessity on their side, have all the advantages while the villagers are the losers". Thus, even under colonisation, those Bila who were not experiencing the immense pressures to exploit others in order to meet tax demands, instead maintained traditional relationships of equality and interdependence with the Mbuti.

One of the central debates in Mbuti studies has concerned whether "the villagers have far more need of the Mbuti than the Mbuti have of the villagers" (Turnbull 1965: 38) or whether the foragers have been nutritionally dependent on the cultivators (Schebesta 1933, Bailey et all 1989). There are those who, taking a less extreme view than Turnbull, never the less argue that both groups can survive independently of each other, and thus that hunter-gatherers can live independently of cultivation. This is an assumption implicit in the claim that the hunter-gatherers were the original inhabitants of the rainforest (Bahuchet 1993b, Bila and Mbuti oral history).

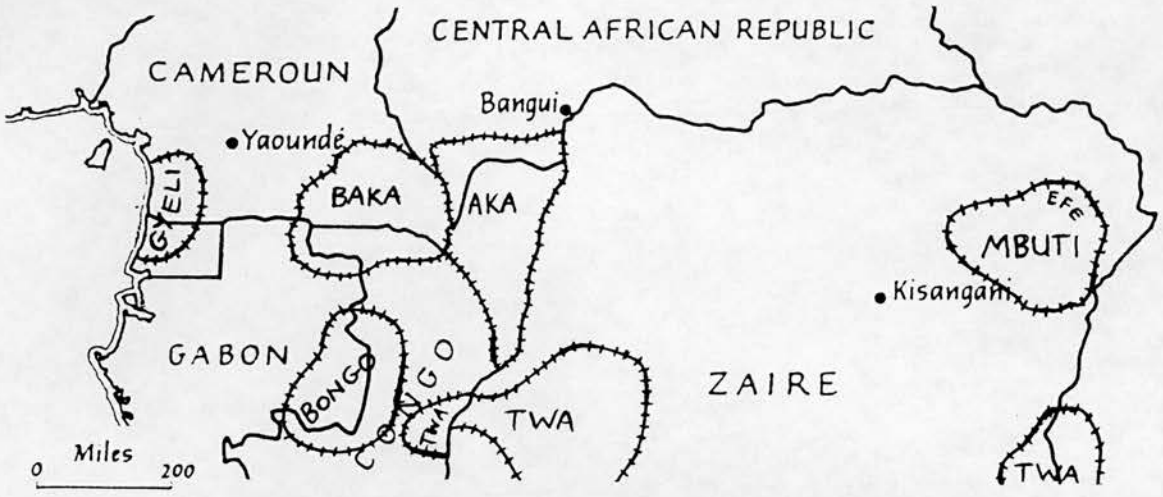
Bailey (Bailey et all 1989), Heidland and Reid (1989) and Hart and Hart (1984, 1986) argue that hunter- gatherers such as the Mbuti have always lived at the interface between forest foraging, and trading meat or working villagers fields in order to acquire starch from villagers gardens to meet their basic nutritional needs. Contrary to Turnbull's description of the Bila as dependent on the Mbuti, Bailey sees the foragers as dependent on the farmers, and the Harts see the two groups as mutually dependent:

> In the central and southern Ituri, Mbuti tend either to be in camps near villages, where they provide garden labour in exchange for agricultural food, or else they are in forest hunting camps where they acquire meat to exchange for cassava, plantains, or rice (Hart & Hart 1986: 41).

John and Terese Hart suggest that "evergreen forests of the Ituri were essentially uninhabited until recently. Small-scale shifting cultivation has permitted hunter-gatherers to occupy these environments on a permanent basis" (1986: 51). They argue that the forest environment cannot nutritionally support a hunter-gatherer economy unless it also relies either on trade with farmers or on the food plants made available through the alterations caused by shifting cultivation.

The argument concerning the viability of living only by hunting and gathering in tropical rainforest ecosystems has been widespread (see, for example, Headland 1987, the 1991 special issue of *Human Ecology* on the subject, Dentan 1991, Hladik et all 1993, and McKey in press). Bahuchet has questioned the Harts' hypothesis on several different grounds. He argues that linguistic and genetic similarities between the Aka, Baka and Mbuti suggest (after Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 405-406) that these groups share a common origin; and that when Aka and Baka "show some lexical relationship to other groups, it is always with the languages of farmers located to the east" (1993b: 44) suggesting that over time they may have migrated from the eastern part of the Congo basin where the Mbuti currently reside.

Fig. 6. Location of the main 'Pygmy' groups of Central Africa



Bahuchet goes on to suggest that the linguistic, cultural, and genetic similarities which the Aka, Baka and Mbuti share, also differentiate them from the other major 'Pygmy' populations: the Twa of central Zaire, the Bongo in Congo and Gabon, and the Kola and Gyeli near the Cameroonian and Gabonese coast. The distribution of these major population groups "match closely the three main areas of rain forest that persisted during the time of maximum dryness at 18 000 years ago. . . . the people inhabiting the forests of the Congo Basin before the dry period retreated into three localised groupings as the forest receded" (1993b: 49); and they have been isolated from each other for a long period of time. He proposes the idea that:

> the ancestors of the three Pygmy populations are not recent migrants from savannah to rain forest, but are populations that stayed where they were as rain forests invaded the rest of the Congo basin during the wetter periods after 15 000 BP. Only later on, during the fifth millennium BP, did other populations migrate into the area from the Benoue region, bringing with them agriculture, and the technologies for making ceramics and forging iron. (Bahuchet 1993b: 50)

The ecological evidence put forward by those arguing that it is not possible to subsist by hunting and gathering in tropical forest has been seriously questioned by Hladik and Dounias (1993) who draw on evidence for high consumption and density of wild yams in many areas, from Malaysia to Africa. They also point to errors of interpretation in the debate. For instance, the evidence for wild yam standing biomass "which corresponds to 5 000 kg for a pygmy territory of 50 km^2, was mistakenly cited by Vincent (1985) as 500 kg" (1993: 173); leading to the nutrition available from wild yams to be estimated at ten per cent of its actual yield. Bahuchet also questions whether the Harts' data is relevant to the mixed forest prevalent throughout most of the central African rainforest, since their data was mainly gathered from the "very peculiar *Gilbertiodendron* monospecific forest, rather than [from] so-called primary forest in general" (Bahuchet 1991a: 208).

The Harts and Bailey argue that the Mbuti must have entered the forest alongside cultivators, and that the cultivators, far from being invasive destroyers of the Mbutis' peaceful forest world, actually made possible the spread of Mbuti life through the forest (e.g. Bailey & Peacock 1988: 110-113, contra Turnbull 1965: 38). The importance of the Bailey-Hart hypothesis is that it points to the long standing nature of the cultural and economic exchange relationship between foragers and farmers in the Ituri, emphasising the mutuality of Mbuti and Bila life in place of the separation and opposition Turnbull emphasised. This suggests that, contrary to Bird-David's (1992b) and Ingold's (1992a) analysis, hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti relationship with their environment may form a continuum with (rather than being in opposition to) that of their farming neighbours. The usefulness of Bahuchet's response is that it questions the element of Mbuti dependency attributed by Bailey and the Harts to this exchange, and reflects more accurately the oral history of Mbuti/villager relations.

Although different groups of Mbuti and different villages have differing relationships, these depend on the particular historical and personal circumstances within a broader pattern of long term contact which does not need to involve a form of dependency which curtails autonomy on either side. Thus when Turnbull states "that the Mbuti, with less necessity on their side, have all the advantages while the villagers are the losers"(1965: 41) this sense of 'necessity' derived not from the history of reciprocal exchange between the two groups but from the historical situation in which the Bila were forced by circumstance to attempt to impose effective hierarchy and control.

The Bailey-Harts thesis is that hunter-gatherers could only move into the forest alongside farmers because they have always been nutritionally dependent on trade with farmers or on the food plants made available through the alterations caused by shifting cultivation. Bahuchet argues the opposite case:

> It was nomadic agriculturists, running away from the savannahs, who entered the unknown and, in their eyes, hostile world of the forest and there sought help from professional forest hunter-gatherers (Bahuchet 1988: 146).

Bahuchet's picture is closer to the oral history of the Bila and the Mbuti which emphasises the dependence of the Bila on the Mbuti, rather than the reverse. Phelix tells how, after a fight with neighbouring peoples in the area around Kisangani where the Bila originate from:

> The Bila decided to leave and followed the Ituri River east. The Bila crossed the Lenda River, and beat back the Lese who were the first village inhabitants in the forest. . . When the whites came they stopped the fighting and brought the Bila south of the Epulu River, making it the frontier between the WaLese and the Bila. . . The whites

> demanded an amount of rubber each month and if you didn't collect your amount you were whipped and sent off to collect it. It was the Mbuti who showed the Bila where the rubber trees were.
>
> When the Simba [rebels] came, all the population entered the forest. If the military or the Simba found you, you'd be dead. The Bila and the Mbuti lived together in the forest. If the war returns we'll be together in the forest again.

At the time of my fieldwork there was great tension in Zaire and many Bila felt that they might have to flee into the forest with the Mbuti again. The number of nkumbis held throughout the forest increased dramatically in this period as a way of asserting the unity of the different forest peoples[10]. Phelix's history demonstrate that the Mbuti are seen by the Bila to have come to their rescue on several occasions in the recent past, just as Bahuchet suggests they must have come to the aid of the first farmers as they moved into the unfamiliar forest. Thus historically the Bila are aware of the help they have received from the Mbuti, while ecologically the Mbuti benefit from trade with farmers and from alterations caused by shifting cultivation. Here the enduring nature of the relationship between foragers and farmers is one in which contact enables rather than curtails autonomy, except where the pressure of external forces dictates otherwise.

Before exploring the actual relationship between villagers and Mbuti in the central Ituri today; it is important to remember that this same paradigm (which assumes that relations between farmers and foragers will inevitably disrupt foragers lives) is also applied to human-environmental relations. Here the assumption is that human interaction with the environment will - unless it is 'traditional' hunting and gathering - inevitably be detrimental to the environment. Leach and Fairhead's research in West Africa

> challenges a common assumption that greater land use entails greater soil and vegetation degradation, especially in forest-savannah transition zones where forest is marginal and prone to savannisation. It does, however, add to growing evidence from other parts of the world that farmers can enrich and improve the structure of their soils, and enable and encourage improved fallows (1994: 1).

Similarly, Wilkie's research into roadside hunting in the Ituri found that "hunters are acquiring 59 per cent of their total kills and 39 per cent of the total capture weight of wild game (excluding elephants) within secondary forest that constitutes a mere 26 per cent of the available habitat" (1989: 492). This secondary forest occurs in areas of forest that have been cleared for agriculture and which have subsequently been abandoned as the shifting cultivators move on. Wilkie's finding that secondary forest is as productive for hunters as 'climax' forest (1989: 493) reinforces the point made by Leach and Fairhead that human

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10 Turnbull also remarks on the prevalence of nkumbi rituals in the period after the threat from the Simba's had ended and the different peoples of the Ituri were seeking to re-establish security.

intervention, when it is essentially limited and reversible, can enrich rather than degrade the environment. Pimbert and Pretty argue that

> Anthropogenic influence has often actively maintained and enhanced biological diversity in . . . environments from which rural people have historically derived their livelihoods. Recent findings in ecology suggest that nature is in a state of continuous change. The importance of disturbance is increasingly acknowledged for the maintenance of biological diversity and other fundamental ecological processes (1995: 7).

The difficulty with the Mbuti Debate is that the argument is conducted from within the confines of a belief that contact means dependency. It is for this reason that Turnbull is anxious to assert Mbuti independence, and Bahuchet anxious to assert foragers prior occupation of the forest. In response to this potentially 'romantic' isolationist view, the 'realists' stride in to assert that of course there has always been contact, and this realism can easily slip from demonstrating contact to asserting dependency. The Harts' perspective differs from Bailey's in that, although they argue that foragers could not survive in tropical rainforest without farmers, the relations between Mbuti and Bila can be characterised by equality, by an enduring symbiosis.

That contact and trade has been an enduring and integral part of Mbuti life is supported by my finding that core Mbuti values, rituals and relationships persist as strongly as ever even where contact and trade is strong, in the hunting camps near Utama. Rather than contact meaning dependency, contact is an aspect of autonomy for both the Mbuti and the Bila.

Far from being diminished, aspects of Mbuti culture associated with being in the forest are in a sense encouraged by the presence of villagers in their hunting camps, since the villagers are providing the agricultural produce which enable the Mbuti to remain in the forest for such long periods of time. A comment Alan Barnard has made on the Bushmen could apply equally well to the Mbuti:

> there is no reason to suppose that Bushmen have been out of contact with the outside world, that they should be out of contact, or that contact itself necessarily threatens the resilience of their cultures . . . Bushmen do not cease to be Bushmen when they encounter other peoples or come to be dominated by them (Barnard 1989: 111).

Similarly: Mbuti do not cease to be Mbuti when they encounter other peoples, and in documenting the extent of Mbuti - Bila economic exchanges, and the resilience of Mbuti culture in their hunting camps in the central Ituri, this chapter argues that just as attempted domination in no way diminished Mbuti identity under colonialism, so market hunting (*contra*: Hart & Hart 1984, 1986; Peterson, 1989, 1991, 1992) does not necessarily limit their autonomy, nor threaten the resilience of their culture today. That threat arises from abusive economic and political forces. Forces which may find expression in villager-Mbuti

relations but are not themselves integral to the enduring relations of reciprocity between the Bila and the Mbuti.

MBUTI-BILA ECONOMIC EXCHANGES:

A brief sketch of the Bila of Utama

Utama, during my fieldwork period, had a fluctuating population of between twenty five and thirty five adult villagers. It is a mainly Bila village on the dirt road that runs from Kisangani in the west at the highest navigable point of the Zaire River, to Bunia beyond the forest edge near to Lake Kisenyi in the east. This dirt road has for many years been the only transcontinental African highway. When times are relatively secure occasional trucks carry manufactured goods from east Africa, and agricultural produce such as haricot beans from Kivu, to be sold in Kisangani or loaded onto the river boats there which head south to Kinshasa. Until recently trucks carried beer and soap and other items east from Kisangani and Kinshasa, but as the cities became ever more insecure and the factories closed down altogether, the focus of trade shifted further and further east. The riverboats on the Zaire River no longer functioned, Kisangani had become depopulated, and the occasional truck was more likely to be either arriving from east Africa or carrying mafuta (vegetable oil) from the smaller towns of Isiro and Wamba further north.

Closer to home the road passes through Epulu, thirty five kilometres west of Utama, and Mambasa, thirty five kilometres to the east; passing through the nearby Bila villages of Tonani, two kilometres to the west, and Seti, a kilometre east. The occasional trucks, anticipating huge pot holes ahead, would often stop the night at Utama. Ferdinand, at Seti, was notorious for holding up trucks and stealing from them. The authorities in Mambasa would always arrest him in order to confiscate much of what he had stolen. But they tolerated his behaviour since it boosted their takings; takings which had diminished since the police roadblocks that had been in place on all the main roads at the height of Mobutu's power were no longer tolerated by the population.

Trucks also stopped at Utama because the Bila here had far flung contacts. Some of these were through marriage - many of the women living in the village had husbands who lived in places as near as Mambasa or as far as Beni and Bunia - and some were because the family had been a powerful force in the Ituri in the past and some of the men had themselves travelled much.

The most powerful person in the village was Bamootilita, whose power derived from her generous but assertive personality, and from her critical position as the parent or elder of many of the villagers, and as the embodiment of the older generations, the ancestors. She would often spend evenings telling stories of the old days by the fire, including of the times in the 1960's when the whole village fled into the forest and lived there for a year or two with their Mbuti neighbours in order to escape the violence of the Simba rebels who had killed her husband in Mambasa.

Three of Bamootilita's four children lived at Utama at this time: Bisaili, Jacqui and Janet. Bisaili and his Nande wife had moved to Utama from a village near Epulu where he had inherited his fathers title as the local chief. He had returned to his mothers village which he viewed as his real home. Bisaili, his cousin Banyé, and Phelix (the old sage and traditional healer of the village) would spend periods in the deep forest, either in their own fishing camp, or in Mbuti hunting camps. Bisaili's good humoured sister Jacqui also spent much time in the hunting camps transporting heavy baskets of produce or antelope through the forest.

Jean, a Nande man from Kivu, also spent long periods in the hunting camps. His loud haranguing of the Mbuti, was at odds with the respectful and quiet tone of Bisaili and Banyé. Often feared for his threatening manner, he was also well liked by many Mbuti because his loud sense of drama was entertaining, and they could often benefit from his urgent anxiety to acquire meat. He had married into the village and, in an attempt to maintain authority over his wife and not be subject to her families collective power, his house and fields were as far from the rest of Utama as possible.

The three Mbuti camps close to Utama - to which the Mbuti returned when working in village fields, or participating in village rituals such as the nkumbi - were not static in their location, but were reasonably constant in their membership. One of the smallest encampments near to the village was located in the family fields of Bisaili, Jacqui and Bamootilita; a larger one was in Jeans fields. The largest was at Apamohoko south into the forest, the camp of the Mbuti 'chief' Yuma. Whereas the core members of the other two encampments spent much time in the fields rather than in the forest; the members of Apamohoko provided the core of the hunting camps members. They were the Babukusi, the name of the Mbuti associated with the Bila of Utama.

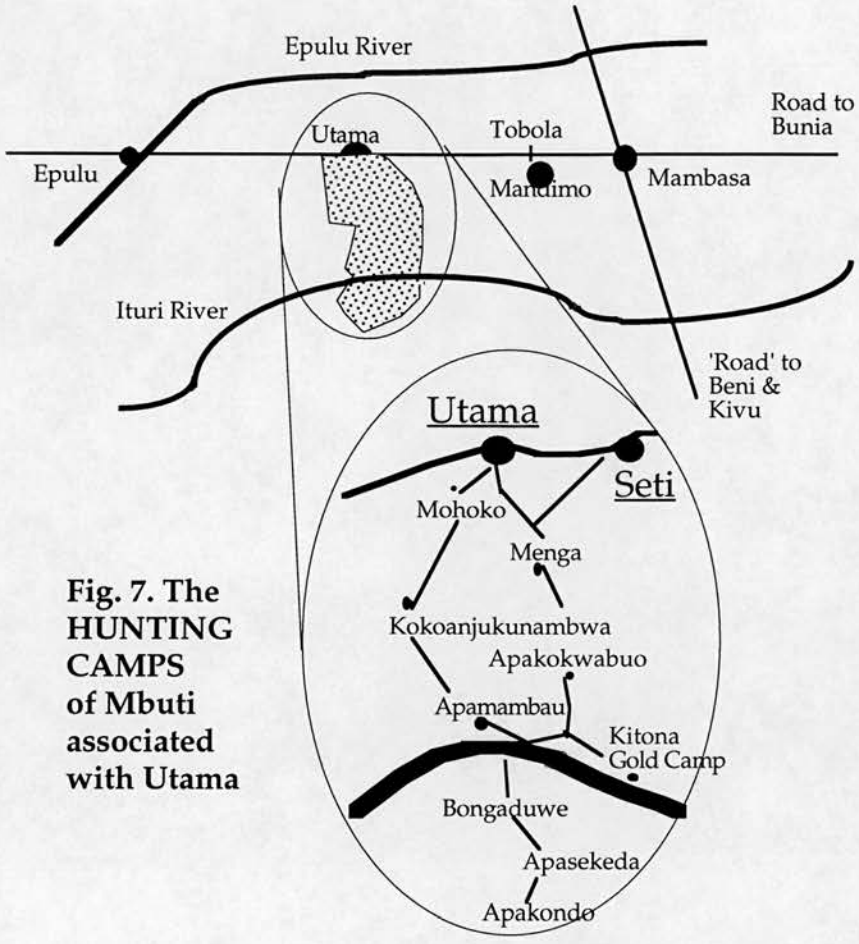

Fig. 7. The HUNTING CAMPS of Mbuti associated with Utama

Demand-sharing and Mbuti inclusiveness

The Mbuti do not generally cultivate their own fields because working in Bila fields means they can gain the fruits of their work on the same day, in the form of food, money, cannabis, or tobacco. Thus their work in Bila fields is part of their immediate return economy rather than an aberration from it, or an addition to it. Working Bila fields rather than their own means they can retain greater freedom of choice about where they live at any particular moment, and who they choose to work for. It also means that they are not vulnerable to the inevitable pressures that demand-sharing would subject them to from fellow Mbuti if they owned and worked their own fields. This demand-sharing, along with fluidity of local grouping and spatial mobility, is part of what Woodburn has described as "a set of distinctive egalitarian practices which disengage people from property, [and which] inhibit not only political change but any form of intensification of the economy"(1982: 447). Woodburn is here referring to Lee's work (1972, 1979) which

describes how the difficulty for the few !Kung who want to farm comes, not from their own inability to build up their stocks, but from the impossibility of restraining "their kin and affines from coming to eat the harvested grain" (Woodburn 1982: 447). A pressure evident among those wage-earning Mbuti who work for the conservationists in Epulu.

Demand sharing means that any Mbuti who clearly has an excess of something will be obliged to share his excess with others or be subject to ridicule and general disapproval. This might involve being singled out in one of the evening speeches made by an elder in camp, mocked in one of the hysterically funny performances by one of the older women, or possibly becoming the subject of ridicule by the molimo's 'fool' when the sacred molimo trumpet arrives in camp at night.

At the Mbuti gold camp of Mandimo sharing was something which was emphasised, as a way of asserting that the gold would be shared out between us all, in contrast to other gold panners who would keep what they each found for themselves. By contrast in the hunting camps, where demand-sharing was not a value that was under threat, people did not have to make a display of asserting the centrality of sharing but would often attempt to hide bits of tobacco or other small items I gave them, usually with very little success. Demand-sharing should not, however, be thought of as simply a rule informing the distribution of material goods among the Mbuti. It does not stand alone but is embedded in an attitude of inclusiveness which informs their relations with everybody. The following description of Hadza inclusiveness, is also true of these Mbuti:

> Hadza society is open and there is simply no basis for exclusion. Equality is, in a sense, generalised by them to all mankind but, sadly, few of the rest of mankind, so enmeshed in property relations, would be willing to extend parity of esteem to hunter-gatherers who treat property with such a lack of seriousness. (Woodburn, 1982: 448)

One point which follows from this is that Mbuti claims on property of villagers or anthropologists is essentially no different from the claim they make on any Mbuti who appears to possess more than they immediately need. Demands on somebody such as myself, who clearly had much more of many things than anybody else, were inevitably endless. Although this could be taken as evidence of Turnbull's split between people of the forest and those of the village, as evidence of the Mbuti always seeking to exploit outsiders, or of some innate and 'rational' human desire to maximise possessions; these would all be superficial readings of the situation. Demands on fellow Mbuti with conspicuous excess were at least as strong as demands on villagers or myself: objects acquired from me would quickly and easily be passed on to others who, in their turn, had demanded them.

Case Study: Appropriate and inappropriate demands

My early period in the hunting camps was characterised by frequent hunger and unhappiness until I learnt the adults ability to know how and when to make persistent and good humoured demands. Just as at the Mbuti gold camp at Mandimo - where I had felt myself accepted after an unfair demand had caused me to demonstrate my emotional limits by getting angry - so here at the hunting camp of Bongaduwe, the moment of acceptance happened when I angrily challenged one of the hunters, Za, over his denying having hidden rice in his hut.

Prior to learning to make direct - and sometimes angry - demands which were invariably amicably received; I had only become angry in a way which was deemed childish. That anger had involved an attitude on my part which assumed the fairness of delayed reciprocity rather than this immediate demand sharing. For example, I had got angry with someone when they demanded tobacco from me; because they had not included me in their distribution of honey earlier in the day. It took me a while to understand that this had been because I hadn't demanded any! Such anger was inappropriate because it assumed an obligation to reciprocate over time, whereas the obligation was simply to make and respond to demands in the present.

Endless demands are an aspect of the inclusiveness Woodburn describes: an inclusiveness which subverts any attempt by someone with power and possessions to maintain a position of power through giving gifts to those with less and thereby seeking to establish in them a sense of indebtedness.

Case Study: The indebtedness of the 'powerful'

An Mbuti man, Kambalé, walking out of the forest and stopped at a villagers home. The villager made a great show of giving Kambalé some cannabis - demonstrating how generous he was. Very soon, to the great consternation of the villager, Kambalé was insisting on needing more and - after being refused - left without having been placed in the villagers debt.

An even clearer example happened one day when I responded to a demand for rice from Matamba ('friend', literally 'one who walks with me') Kanjalai by giving him five glasses of rice. He carefully gathered the rice up in two big leaves, and he then asked me for a shirt. I only had two and needed them both, he knew this but it was a way of making sure that he would be refused something. This meant that, because of all my possessions, I would be left in his debt rather than he in mine.

The Power of Weakness: gender analysis and Mbuti-Bila relations

Henry Sharpe (1994) argues that to understand relations of inequality it makes sense to start from the point of view that both parties exert power in the situation, and it may not always be the person or group classified as dominant which actually holds the most power. He argues that any analysis of gender relations of inequality needs to take as its starting point a complimentarity model rather than one of dominance. One which looks at what is holding these two people or groups together in any particular cultural context, and how that which holds them together can sometimes be used by the gender classified as 'inferior' to exert tremendous power to alter the behaviour of the gender classified as 'superior'. What he is saying is that it is not enough to explain dynamics such as this in terms of the powerful acting on the passive. For, using the complimentarity approach, one can see how "obligatory mutuality can give to the inferior the ability to bind and control the superior" (1994: 45). Such dynamics "are invisible from a dominance perspective" (1994: 57) which is content with delineating power in terms of an active oppressive individual or group acting on a passive powerless one. The dominance model is reductionist, and in isolating relations of presumed coercion from their context; it loses sight of the context within which relations exist. A context in which the person in a position of 'superiority' to can be coerced into recognising responsibility for the 'inferior'; the only other option being the termination of an important relationship.

The point here is that it is not enough to say (contra MacCormack 1980: 20) that powerlessness is not an intrinsic quality but is the result of oppression. For there may be a power one can wield precisely because one has been classified as 'powerless'; as was evident at Mandimo where the very fact that the Mbuti appeared to accept Bênoit's classification of them as 'inferior' meant that they could often maintain the upper hand in the give and take of exchange relations. It is a model which could apply equally well to the Mbuti/Bila relations Turnbull describes.

But there is a profound drawback to this approach, for it looks at the interaction as if it were taking place within a closed system. Which is to say it doesn't take into account the wider political dimension. The dimension from which external forces may well be severely distorting the relationship: causing what might otherwise be a dynamic exchange between individuals and groups who are effectively equal, to become a cycle of abuse and revenge. Turnbull in de-emphasising the effect of colonialism, gave a picture of Mbuti/Bila relations which simply reversed the picture of domination. The Mbuti were in control and in a state of social harmony, and the Bila were frightened of both the forest and the Mbuti and

deserving everything coming to them. In fact, the previous case study demonstrates that Turnbull's picture represents one of the ways Mbuti 'play' their relations with villagers or anthropologists[11]. Perhaps Sharpe overstates his case, and the real point of interest is: what makes either group engage in binding and controlling the other, when autonomy and interdependence would appear to be the underlying nature of their relations unless distorted by overarching abusive pressure.

Bila trading garden produce, Mbuti trading meat and labour

The Bila who live for days or months in the hunting camps are almost all from the villages with which these Mbuti are associated. The trade is between people who have to some degree grown up together: men who have undergone the nkumbi circumcision ritual together, or cleared forest to create fields together; and women who have danced the nkumbi or worked the same fields together. When the hunt is going well, the Mbuti would stay in the forest hunting antelope to exchange for the garden produce and trade items that village traders brought in from the road. When the hunt is going badly, women and sometimes men often leave the hunting camp to go and work in the village fields in order to return from the roadside village with manioc, rice and other supplies.

Many Mbuti live, or spend some time, in villagers shambas, guarding them from animals and thereby earning their right to some of the produce. For a mornings work in the shambas at Utama, an Mbuti might receive a ball of cannabis, or two measures of palm wine. They might work Jeans fields in the morning for tobacco; Bisiali's in the afternoon for manioc; and Jacqie's later for some cannabis. Labour or exchange tends, unlike the hunt, to be undertaken with a specific end in mind

When talking with them in their fields, the Bila often spoke as if the Mbuti only went into the forest for brief periods. Jean, the inmarrying Nande, and Bisiali, the Bila fisher farmer, held a view of the Mbuti calendar which was at odds with their experience in the forest. They claimed that the Mbuti only stopped working the villagers fields to hunt just before Christmas, in order to return with meat for Christmas. That they then worked the fields until heading off to hunt at the end of April or May, returning to the village at the beginning of July to prepare and plant the rice, and only resuming the hunt in September or October. In their minds (when asked at the roadside) the Mbuti were almost always in the village fields. By contrast, the Mbuti whom all three of us had spent many months with, had entered the forest in October and, although membership was fluid and many returned to the

11 And, remembering projecting my feelings of intrusiveness onto Bênoit, I would suggest that Turnbull's picture of Mbuti-Bila relations owes something to his projecting his sense of alienation and being outwitted by the Mbuti onto the Bila.

road for days or weeks during the period (especially for the feast of Christmas), the group as a whole did not return to the roadside villages of Utama and Seti until July. Ten per cent of the men had not once been to the roadside villages in these nine months of hunting.

Ironically, part of the reason for this may have been the pressure from Dieu Donner (the corrupt chef de groupement) on four of the Mbuti youths to pay a huge fine in antelopes for the death of an old Mbuti woman. The Mbuti chief Yuma had accused her of making an Mbuti man ill through sorcery, and she had died several months after the youths had beaten her up. Telesa, a Bila woman from Epulu, was held responsible for paying the fine, partly because some of these Mbuti were traditional exchange partners of her family. Dieu Donner knew that her relations with the Mbuti were such that she would be able to persuade them to hunt for her, and that he would thereby be able to receive his forty *nyama* (meat, animals) from her even if he failed to extract them from the Mbuti themselves.

Some traders would acquire only a few nyama and some would acquire many. Jean tended to position himself in the centre of camp: he would be at its hub, forever engaging in banter, ordering people about, and giving out small gifts in anticipation of future exchanges. He would normally get the first offers of meat when the hunters returned. Over the long term individual traders success bears a close relation to the quality of the relationships they establish both with the Mbuti hunters and with their fellow villagers. Thus although Jeans abrasiveness meant he succeeded in acquiring many antelope from the Mbuti, this same abrasiveness put him in conflict with the equally abrasive villager, Pati, who on this occasion called in the gendarmes from Mambasa who confiscated all the meat they found in the hunting camp. By contrast Banyé, who was village chief at Utama at that time, could acquire antelope partly because of his marriage to Alimoya, who was popular among her fellow Mbuti. However this also meant that he was open to demand-sharing and losing much of what he gained since, as was discussed earlier, the process of demand-sharing makes it very difficult for any Mbuti who has much of something - including Banyé's wife Alimoya - to refuse the demand of another Mbuti for something which they lack.

Exchanges with Kitona Gold Camp

Banyé and his cousin Bisaili, were able to rely on fishing whenever the hunt was not going well. They paddled for two hours in the morning, going upriver in a pirogue checking the twenty or so lines they had left overnight in the river; and did the same for two hours in the evening; often catching between six and twelve medium to large fish, which they then smoked over the fire in the same way that the antelope are smoked to preserve them. When

the hunting camp was based near the Ituri River, they could head downriver to one of the gold carriers. Here they exchanged their fish and meat for gold at a much better price than they could receive at the roadside villages. For example a large fish, which would net Bisaili 7 million zaires at the roadside, would fetch half a gramme of gold, worth 18 million zaires. However here he would pay two tige, or six million zaires, for a bottle of cooking oil which costs a quarter of that in Bandisendi. Most crucially those in charge of the gold camp - who controlled the transportation of goods into the camp - charged five tige, or fifteen million zaires, for one bottle of beer.

Each worker at Kitona paid three tige a day to the PDG (President Directeur General) who was the person in charge of the gold concession. The workers could then keep whatever gold they found. They would pan in the Ituri River in two's or three's, with dozens and sometimes hundreds of them crowded along the same stretch. Using incredibly long handled shovels to dig into the riverbed at the fast flowing side of the Ituri River, they lifted the shovel clear of the water; and if they were extremely lucky they might find a tige worth of gold. Most worked for a few weeks or months to gain the money they needed for the marriage or radio or whatever they had set their hearts on. The atmosphere of the camp was like a shanty town with music blaring from cheap radios, with children everywhere, and the women in brightly coloured cloth. Meanwhile by the river the men were busy shouting and working hard - there was a sense of rivalry, of the school playground - not exactly hostile, but volatile, with the feeling that anything could happen. The PDG, Mariamu, was an enormous MuKusu woman from just south of Mambasa. Her brother Sourrit had recently married Tamu in Utama village; which meant that the woman in charge of the largest gold concession in the area was well connected to a village in which women were in an equally powerful although very different position. Mariamu was in the process of having a big shamba created to provide manioc, haricot, rice, and other produce to sell to her workers.

Where gold searchers sought enough gold to get what they had set their hearts on; more often than not they simply spent all the gold they found on expensive necessities like food, and luxuries like alcohol, whose price and supply the PDG controlled. This process enriched the owners of the gold concessions who cleared forest to make ever bigger shambas in order to support the most profitable part of their business: selling produce to a captive market at exorbitant prices. The gold seekers often returned home no better off than when they had arrived.

Plate 3. Digging in the Ituri River for Gold

Plate 4. Mbuti Man Climbing for Honey

Is Mbuti and Bila economic activity, and exchange, sustainable?

Mbuti

In general Mbuti hunters exchange forest produce - such as antelope, honey, and roofing leaves - for villagers trade items - like salt, cooking oil, metal cooking pans, and cloth - and for villagers garden produce. This is in order to satisfy basic needs, to be able to remain in the hunting camp, while hopefully being able to get hold of enough cannabis, tobacco or other luxury items through exchanging the smaller parts of meat which do not form part of the overall exchange pattern. The incidental nature of the luxuries is mirrored by the use of parts of the animals body that are not highly valued.

A key point here is that although the Mbuti are clearly very happy to return with many antelope from the hunt, this has less to do with seeking to optimise the yield achieved by the hunt (Layton et all 1991: 256) and more to do with providing experiential evidence of their good relationship with the forest and their skill as hunters (Bird-David 1992b: 30). Their prime concern is to catch enough meat both to eat and to exchange with villagers for agricultural products or luxury items. To catch more than this does not ultimately benefit the hunters or their families, since there is no accumulation of wealth. Since market hunting in the central Ituri is undertaken by Mbuti within the context of long-standing relationships with Bila exchange partners, it only differs from subsistence hunting in that the focus is on hunting meat primarily for immediate exchange rather than for immediate consumption. However, for the Mbuti it does not involve a shift from seeking enough meat to satisfy immediate requirements to seeking to maximise the 'production' of antelope. The benefit of market hunting is that it enables them to remain in the forest for longer periods while maintaining a reliable supply of agricultural and luxury items in camp, usefully rationed by villagers. In this context the focus remains one of meeting subsistence needs and maintaining a good relationship with the forest and ancestors themselves.

Bila

The Bila traders, resident for long periods of time in Mbuti hunting camps, rarely make a profit from trading agricultural produce for meat. This fact, combined with the evident enjoyment many of them experience at being in the camps, indicates that they are there for other reasons than economic advantage. As well as illicit love affairs, it is also simply a chance to be away from the village, from the ever-present possibility of harassment by higher state authorities, and a chance to relax and socialise with other Bila and Mbuti in a forest environment they know well.

Table 1.

MEAT TRADING PRICES AND EXCHANGES

Exchange equivalents:

	Rice	Flour	Oil	Soap	Salt	Alcohol	Taba	Bangui
Antelope								
Mboloko:	8	10	2	3	4	1	11	11
Lendu hind leg:	5	6	1	2	2	half	6	6
Lendu foreleg:	3	4	half	1	1	third	5	5

For example one whole Mboloko = 8 glasses of rice; 1 whole Lendu (4 legs) = 16 glasses of rice.
(NB: These exchange equivalents do not vary because they are not based on money equivalents)

Measurements used (and price at road):

Rice:	1 glass	= 300,000z at Utama/Mambasa
Flour	1 glass	= 200,000z at Utama/Mambasa
Soap	1 small square	
Salt	1 little tomato tin	= 300,000z at Utama
Oil	1 primus bottle	= 1 million z at Mambasa
Alcohol	1 primus bottle	
Taba	1 long dried leaf	= 200-300,000z at Utama
Bangui	1 large pinch	= 250,000z at Utama
Cloth piece	15 million at Bunia, 45 million at Bandisende	

3 million zaires = $1 during this period (NB: rice, grown in villagers fields, costs only the labour)

Prices at road of forest 'produce':

Lendu	12 million zaires
Mboloko	5 million zaires
2 smoked fish	3, 4 or 5 million zaires (depending on size)
1 gramme gold	25 million at Mambasa, 40 million at Butembo

Example: A trader might pay 2 - 2 $^{1/2}$ million zaires for 1 lendu worth 12 million zaires at the road.
Explanation: 1 lendu (all four legs) could be obtained by giving a hunter 8 small tins of salt costing 2,400,000 zaires in total at the road. Add the portage costs: a fiftieth of 5 million zaires (100,000z) to transport the salt to the hunting camp; a twentieth of 5 million zaires (250,000z) to transport the lendu out to the road; then divide this by half since the 5 million zaires covers portage both ways.

Table 2.

MBUTI NET HUNTS

Name of hunting camp (number of nets):		Animals caught (hours hunting):
Apakokwabuo:	(17 nets)	1, (5 hours), 21(9 hours), 2,
Bongaduwé:	(13 nets)	6, 12, 4 (5 hrs);
	(19 nets)	11, 12, 3, 17;
Apakondo:	(15 nets)	17+pig+tepé(6 hrs), 24 (10 hrs)
Apamambau & Kokoanjukunambwa:	(12 nets)	3 (6 hours), 5, 2, 7, 3, 3, 10, 1, 6, 0
Pékoko:	(12 nets)	3 (6 hours)
Apamohoko:	(6 nets)	1 (8 hours), 4 (8 hours)

•This is only a selection from the days hunting in the different camps.
•The number of nets is greatest in the camps furthest from the village and nearest to the Ituri River.
•The hunts at the further camps (Bongaduwe & Apakondo south of the river) had the best chance of netting a large number of animals; although the catch still varied tremendously from day to day.
•Returning towards the village the number of nets lessens; Apamohoko is very close to the village.

Although large profits are theoretically possible for the Bila from acquiring hunted animals, the overheads are high. For the long period of time that traders spend in the hunting camps they will have to transport in all they need and, unless fishing, will not be doing any productive work themselves. Meanwhile a relative or, in the more usual case, a wife, has had to stay behind in the village to tend the shamba and will need to pay Mbuti to work in the fields. Most traders are men and, while a trader is absent, his wife may have been tempted to take a lover (as Denis found); or she may have left him entirely (as Bisiali's second wife did); or on the other hand if he has acquired a new wife or lover through the long period spent at the camp there will be difficulty on returning to the village (as Jean found).

In the case of these three villagers the profit from the exchange that isn't spent on replenishing basic equipment or needs, tends to be spent on dealing with wives or lovers. Dealing with lovers is not immediately so costly: a woman will expect gifts of the equivalent of a dollar or so - perhaps in the form of soap or palm oil - from the man. By contrast, for these same male traders the first person that substantial profits are spent on tends to be their wives.

Case Study: Labour and love

In both Denis' and Jeans' cases the first thing they bought, with the money made from selling meat, was cloth for their wives. Jean, returning with 18 nyama, bought cloth for his two 'wives', and fifty yards of fishing net for catching big fish, salt, and petrol for his lamps. His first wife refused him permission to build a home for the second wife he had 'acquired' in the hunting camp, and (since his first wife was Bila the land was hers and the village was on her side) he ended up losing his new found wife because he was unable to build a house for her.

Denis, returning with 10 nyama exchanged them for cloth for his two wives, and trousers, flip flops, and shirts for his children; before discovering that the wife he had left behind had taken a lover while he was away. Bisaili, had to use half the proceeds from selling his fish to pay the outstanding huge fine imposed on him at Epulu for assaulting his second wife's lover after she had decided to leave Bisaili and return to Epulu while he was in the forest.

The Utama village chief Banyé, who was always in the hunting camps with his Mbuti wife Alimoya, was the only fisherman or trader who seemed to not have to spend all his money coping with problems associated with having more than one wife or lover. Yet, as was

mentioned above, because he had an Mbuti wife his profits could easily be eroded in camp through demand-sharing; and ultimately the villagers refused to let him continue to be chief because he refused to take another - village - wife.

Conclusion

Bila shifting cultivators at Utama in the heart of the Ituri work with a very different economy to that of the Nande incomers at Tobola. A Nande farmer such as Nziwa at Tobola was happy to sell me rice because his livelihood is in cultivating and in selling agricultural produce. He and his neighbouring Nande farmers saw their future in expanding their plantations, often to supply gold panners with produce in exchange for gold.

By contrast, here at Utama Bisaili was reluctant to sell me rice because his agricultural produce is either for subsistence or to exchange with Mbuti for meat, doubling its value relative to selling it direct[12]. This accounts for why a Nande village like Tobola had an impressive amount of produce for sale at the roadside, while the Bila village of Utama only displayed fruit, nuts, baking, or other items which are not part of the meat exchange system[13]. For the Bila money is acquired primarily through selling meat or fish; not through selling agricultural produce directly. By contrast, the Nande economy at the forests edge is often driven by the need to expand their plantations to acquire gold - in order to sustain their kin networks broader economy - an economy of plantations and gold in which the Mbuti are easily used and discarded. Meanwhile here, at the centre of the forest, the Bila and Mbuti economy involves a constant sustainable movement between river, forest and road. It is a constant exchange of Mbuti forest produce and labour for Bila agricultural produce and trade goods which is not driven by external extractive forces but by local social relations and needs.

While gold panners are engaged in an economic process which would appear to be unsustainable for all but those in charge of the gold camp and the lucky few; for the Mbuti, market hunting offers the chance to remain in the forest for long periods of time; and it offers the Bila an alternative context for living, and the - rarely realised - scope to become substantially better off.

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12 For example Bisaili could sell me eight glasses of rice for 2.4 million zaires, or exchange it for one mboloko which would fetch 5 million zaires once he had brought it back to the road.
13 There is a clear parallel between Mbuti only exchanging peripheral parts of the hunted animal for luxuries, and Bila only exchanging peripheral products at the road. Both indicate the secondary status of such exchange in their economies.

Case Study: Protestations of power

Today, as under colonialism, what underpins Bila/Mbuti relations can be a laughable, or oppressive, structural opposition at the end of a long chain of abusive relationships. More often, though, it is the usual fluid movement between forest and village that both Bila and Mbuti are entwined in.

A good example of this is the Bila chief Banyé and his Mbuti wife Alimoya, who move with the other Bila and Mbuti between the river, forest and road. One evening Bisaili complained to me that Banyé *shouldn't* have an Mbuti wife. "They don't know how to cook, nor look after a home" he said; before heading over to eat a meal she had prepared from the fish they had caught that day. And I watched the three of them laughing over some joke, as the firelight played on their faces and on the huge trees overarching the camps small clearing: the reality of relationship dissolving his protestations of power.

Thus, unlike under colonialism, this economic exchange between Bila and Mbuti is not driven by the necessity for the Bila to meet tax and labour demands, but is a meeting of equals; however much Mbuti sometimes seek to manipulate the situation through protesting their poverty, and Bila sometimes seek to assert dominance and hierarchy through protesting their power.

CHAPTER 6 THE MOLIMO AND THE NET HUNT: The Mbuti and the Forest

This chapter focuses on relationships among the Mbuti, and between the Mbuti and the forest. The nature of the hunt, the mediating power of the molimo, and Mbuti relations with each other and with the forest, are seen to be centred in egalitarianism and a strong identification with the forest. Economic relations between the Mbuti and the Bila have, as we have seen, changed significantly since colonialism; and it is possible that in some ways their relations may therefore more closely resemble their pre-colonial, rather than their colonial, state. By contrast, the core ways in which the Mbuti relate to the forest and to each other would appear to remain remarkably resilient.

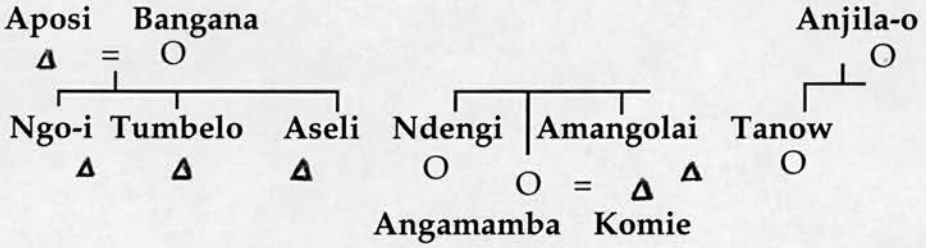
Central among these is the demand-sharing we have already discussed, the net hunt itself, and the molimo ritual which was happening almost nightly for weeks on end during my main fieldwork period. This chapter begins by briefly sketching relations among the Mbuti, and by placing their relations in the context of their having to deal with abusive external forces.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PEOPLE

Abusive Power Relations

Throughout this period of my fieldwork the impact of Dieu Donner, the Bila Chef de Groupement, made itself felt in camp. His actions included: arresting the four youths responsible for having beaten up the old woman they and Yuma had accused of being a witch, demanding the payment of a fine of forty *mboloko* duiker, and beating up the Mbuti chief Yuma when not enough mboloko arrived. Dieu Donner was well hated by the Mbuti and by most Bila. In any dispute in which those involved wished for a fair outcome they would always go to Umatatu, the Chef de Groupement for the neighbouring area towards Epulu, rather than draw Dieu Donner into the situation since that could only mean a heavy fine on all parties, or on only one side if the other was able to bribe him handsomely. Dieu Donner had ousted the traditional chief Batomine, who had been unpopular with the local authorities in the Zone de Mambasa. They accused him of being lazy and failing in his duty since he did not engage in Dieu Donner's zealous approach to inventive taxation, and therefore rarely enriched those above him. Meanwhile the new chief was seen as efficient and hard working by many incoming Nande, such as Venance at Mandimo, and by others in positions of power. They described him as working hard and they viewed local people as lazy for sitting back like Batomine and failing to really exploit the wealth of the forest.

The story of a corrupt chief, with all the power of a corrupt political system behind him, is only half the story however. It was because these Mbuti beat up the old woman that they laid themselves open to his abuse. Anjila-o, the old woman accused of being a witch, was distantly related to Ngo-i, the man whose near fatal illness she was accused of causing.



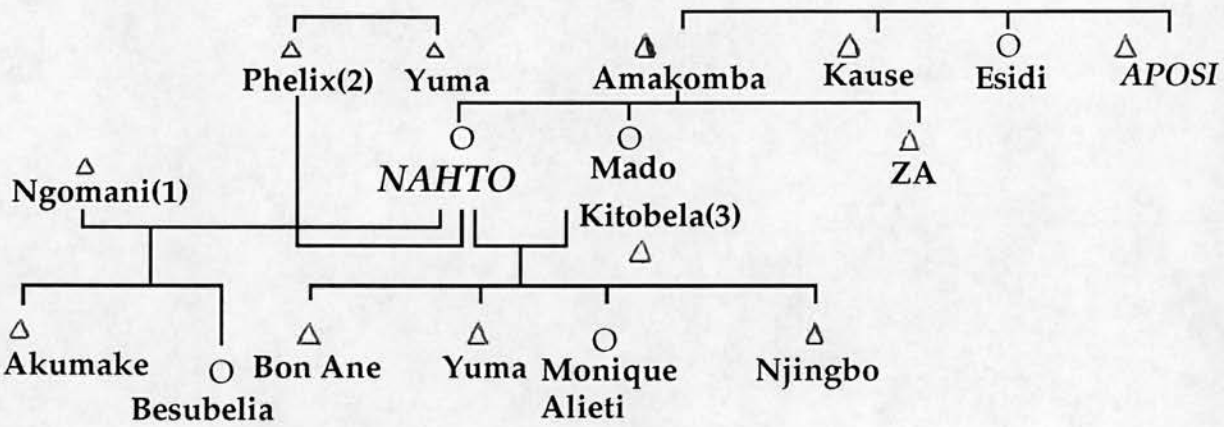
The reason the four hunting companions gave for beating her up was that it was because the Mbuti chief, Yuma, had told them to do this to frighten her into refraining from causing the illness. Yuma was a fierce orator, and a man who was himself caught up in seeking to assert his power while fearing its erosion. He often accused others of sorcery, believing they were causing his hunting to be unsuccessful and wishing him harm. Yuma and his wife Salama were childless and for the most part they lived in the Mbuti camps very close to the village. It was when he arrived in the hunting camps that talk of sorcery would increase. Yuma was absent from the hunting camps for much of the time and, of the older people, those who carried the greatest authority in camp and on the hunt were his sister-in-law Nahto, her brother Za, and her maternal uncle Aposi.

Camp Relations

Nahto was a formidable woman who had been married three times. Her present husband, Kitobela, was quiet and acquiescent, and spent most of his time at the Mbuti camp near Jeans fields, always deferring to her dynamic presence when he visited the hunting camps. Nahto had had two children by her first husband, Ngomani, who now lived elsewhere. They were Akumaké and his sister Besubelia, both of whom were often in camp with their children. After Ngomani she married Yuma's elder brother, a man called Phelix who should have been chief but had left Utama because he didn't want a position that gave him no power over his fellow Mbuti while leaving him accountable for their every action to people such as the Chef de Groupement. Before he left, Nahto and he had had four children, who had remained here with their mother. Since Phelix's brother Yuma was childless, it was Nahto and Phelix's eldest son, Bon Anné, who would succeed his uncle Yuma as chief. Bon Anné was a powerful hunter, a leader much sought after by the women, and his voice was often hoarse from smoking too much cannabis. His second eldest brother was Yuma; and their sister, Monique Alieti, shared Yuma's sense of humour

rather than Bon Anné's somewhat preoccupied brooding presence, a presence akin to that of chief Yuma. The youngest, Njingbo, was a quieter man. Apart from Njingbo, the rest had Nahto's ability to inspire and to come up with the unexpected; and this was perhaps one of the key abilities that tended to give them leadership in their age group.

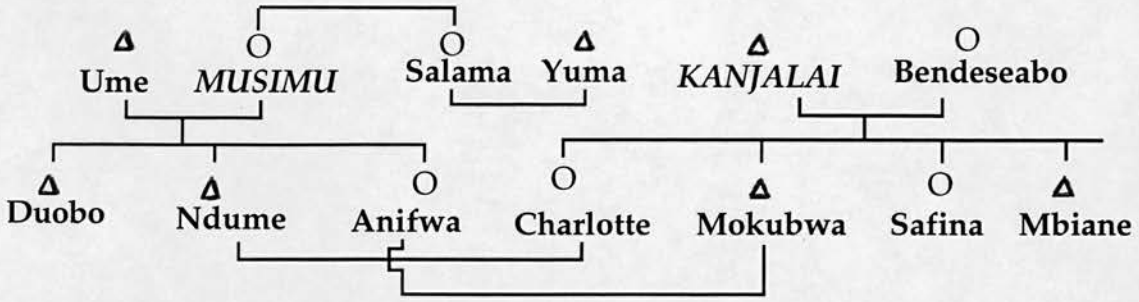
Nahto herself was in a pivotal position. Not only had she been married to Yuma's elder brother, but her children were at the heart of these hunting camps; camps which ranged in size from twenty five to fifty adults. When the numbers rose too high and the number of hunting nets became unwieldy, and diminished the available game near the camp too rapidly, then the group would often split into two camps.



Nahto's younger brother Za, a man with a dry sense of humour, tended to take the lead in hunting. He was a thin man, well into middle age, and was normally based with the hunting band his father had belonged to further west at Bandisendi (where both he and Nahto had been born, and where their mother and father had long since died). It was their mother who was of the Babukusi here at Utama, and it was to her mothers group that Nahto had long been attached. Za had come along to join the Babukusi with his new young wife Masamba after his previous wife had died; and at night, unlike most of the men, he chose to sleep with his new wife rather than join the molimo singing. He often made speeches in the evening, but always from his own hearth at the side of the camp, and never from the centre which would suggest belonging and commitment to the camp, since part of his approach was to keep alive the possibility that he might return to his own group and that they might lose the man most of them thought of as the best hunter. Za was generally followed when he showed leadership related to where and when the hunt should take place. Thus reflecting a broader experience of leadership among the Mbuti which is 'authoritative' rather than 'authoritarian' (Silberbauer, writing on the Khoisan, 1982: 29),

Aposi (Nahto and Za's maternal uncle) had long ago been chief of the Babukusi, during the brief period between Nahto's husband Phelix leaving and Yuma becoming old enough to replace him. He was related to most of the people in camp, his three sons were in this group and they and other relations would group their huts in another part of camp to Nahto and her children. Two of his sons, Tumbelo and Aseli, had beaten up the old woman. Komie, the fourth hunter involved in the incident, would sometimes place his hut nearer to Tumbelo and his brothers, and other times nearer to Bon Anné. Komie was often laughed at for being fanatical. The sheer amount of cannabis he smoked often entailed others having to pull him out of a fearfully spaced out state by working on his body: they would do this casually, placing their hands on his head as he went through convulsions while they continued their conversation with someone else, almost completely ignoring him until he had regained his composure. The speed with which he would race up trees in search of honey, wielding his axe in search of the hive faster than anybody, and the way he threw himself so completely into any task at hand, such as digging up the *ambaka* tree at the start of the nkumbi, was highly unusual. It was easy to imagine him obeying Yuma's order to beat up the old woman with far more thoroughness than anybody had intended. The conflict that emerged between Aseli and Bon Anné over Bon Anné taking Aseli's wife, partly reflected the potential for conflict between two of the main families in camp.

Two of the other main families in these hunting camp were those of Kanjalai and of Musimu. Musimu was an elderly woman with a wicked sense of humour who would often bring disputes to an end with performances which reduced the whole camp to tears of laughter. Her sister Salama was married to chief Yuma. Her eldest son, Duobo, was in his forties, was unmarried and like some other unmarried adults (such as Mado, the sister of Nahto and Za) was considered a doctor with powers to heal which were connected with not having children. Unlike his brother Ndumé and his sister Anifwa, Duobo moved frequently between this and other hunting camps. Ndumé and Anifwa were married to two of Kanjalai's children, Charlotte and Mokubwa, through *kosono* (sister/brother exchange). Together with Musimu's quiet husband Umé, and Kanjalai when he was in camp, the two families provided a third nucleus of the camp. In this situation kosono (sister/brother exchange) did not appear to be about men's control of women, but about siblings staying close to each other and building up a network of support in which tasks such as childcare and cooking were more closely shared than between other couples.



Although he was a superb hunter, Kanjalai preferred to stay near Utama working with the old Bila sage of Utama, Phelix. He stayed there partly out of his love for the palm wine that could be found both at Utama and at Menga, the small Bila and Mbuti settlement an hour south of Utama into the forest. When Phelix spent time fishing at the Ituri River, Kanjalai would go with him, and he also entered the forest to help me learn my way to the hunting camps. At first he would return to Utama the day after he had shown me the way, but later when I knew the paths myself he would often accompany me anyway and choose to stay in the camps when I returned to the village. The closeness between Kanjalai and his wife, and both of them and Phelix and his Lese wife, was clearly a strong reason to remain in the village. The four of them lived slightly apart from the rest of the village, far enough to discourage people from visiting after dark, which meant that they could pass quiet evenings together in the telé that Phelix and Kanjalai had built. They were surrounded by their fields which reached to the edge of the primary forest nearby. Kanjalai, his wife, and their three very young children lived in a large Mbuti hut of interwoven saplings thatched with leaves, and Phelix lived in a villagers square mud house nearby. The relationship ensured a good supply of garden produce for all, and because the fields supposedly belonged to Phelix this meant that Kanjalai's family were protected from losing all their hard earned produce to other Mbuti through demand-sharing. Kanjalai's family worked the fields alongside Phelix and his wife, and took what they wanted when they wanted.

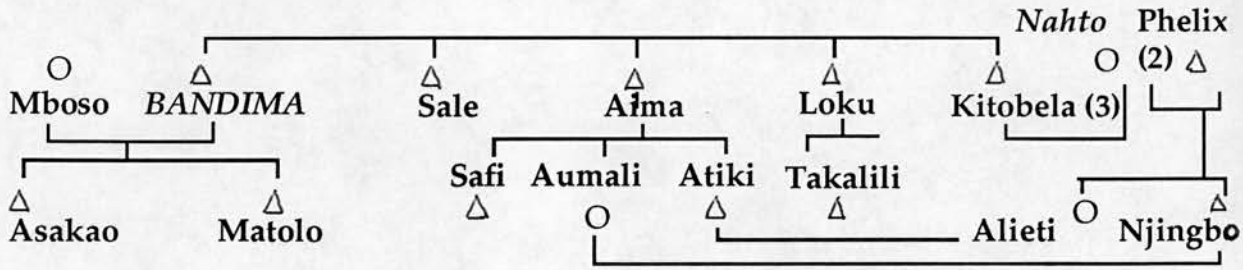
Kanjalai's family were members of the Nangbali group, differentiated from the main Babukusi group of Mbuti at Utama because the Nangbali were forbidden from eating leopard, whereas the Babukusi could not eat snakes. A similar taboo distinguished the Bandicambwa Bila of Utama, who did not eat chimpanzees, from the Bandisolo Bila of Seti who did not eat apolo. The reason the Bandicambwa gave for not eating chimpanzees was because they were practically human, and had saved the life of a Bandicambwa man in the past in the forest. Seeing a chimpanzee being transported, along with a dozen passengers on the top of a precariously swaying truck as it negotiated deep pot holes, Chief Paulo rushed towards it waving wildly and shouting Iko mutu kabisa! (it is truly a human). All the village waved and laughed in amazement as they watched their animal sitting like a

human on the passing truck. The Bandisolo admired the apolo - which is a small forest mammal with a white tail, much bigger than a rat, that lives in a hole in the forest - because it thinks in the long term. It transports and stores food in its burrow, rather than just eating it all up: storing food in the good times which it eats in the bad times. Kanjalai allowed one to slip under his hunting net rather than catching it, suggesting that he was almost as wary of harming another groups totem as he was of harming his own.

Kanjalai's small son Mbiané (KiMbuti for 'tall one'), spent much time in the hunting camps living with his elder siblings Charlotte and Mokubwa, and carrying Kanjalai's heavy hunting net as he hunted in Kanjalai's place. His much older sister Safina, spent most of her time helping her mother in the fields and being helped in looking after her small baby, Phelix, after the recent death of her husband. Mokubwa had his parents gentleness but not his fathers courage, while Charlotte was widely thought of as the beauty of the camp, and had fallen for Ndumé and his startling sense of humour at an nkumbi dance. Ndumé's dancing was quite extraordinary and, although he and Charlotte spent most of their times in the hunting camps, he was also building them a square villagers mud house next door to Kanjalai's hut. Whenever a man explicitly engages in building a home it is always a square one, whether substantial like this one of Ndumé's in the village, or makeshift in the hunting camps. Ndumé's is the only such house being built by an Mbuti in the village, and it is partly made possible by the actual equality which exists between Phelix and Kanjalai. For Ndumé and Charlotte there is no contradiction between maintaining a strong presence in the camps and establishing a semi-permanent dwelling near the village: the two worlds are not opposed to each other but rather supplement each other.

The centre of a group can fall apart on the death of an elder. When Bandima, the eldest brother of the older generation of the Mbuti group based in Jeans fields near Seti, died; Jean was very upset not so much at the death of an old friend but because his group then gradually lost members to other groups, including that in Tabu's fields. Bandima's younger brothers were all old; including Kitobela, Nahto's latest husband. It was partly because of Nahto's marriage to Kitobela that, when the hunting camp split in April, Nahto and her six children headed to the new camp of Libumbashi with Bandima's son Matolo; accompanying them were Jean and Bila traders from Seti. However, not only had Nahto married Kitobela, but her two youngest children had married the daughter and son of one of Kitobela's elder brothers. Through her kin and through marriage she had placed herself in an absolutely pivotal position. Meanwhile the families of her uncle Aposi, her brother Za, and the more distantly related families of Musimu and Kanjalai, formed the other camp at Apamambau; accompanied by Bila from Utama including Bisaili and Banyé. Thus the

camp had split along village lines, with Seti traders going with the Mbuti based in Jeans fields near Seti, and Utama traders going with the Mbuti who identified themselves with the camps nearer to the centre of Utama. It was Nahto's privileged position which meant she had the choice of prioritising her already strong links with either group.



Kosono: brother/sister exchange

Arriving at Bongaduwé

In order to be able to discuss specific incidents of more general social patterns, I shall frame this account of life in the forest within a description of Bongaduwé, one of the hunting camps just south of the Ituri River. The move to Bongaduwé was partly because the hunting at the previous camp of Apakokwabuo was no longer successful, and partly to get further away from Dieu Donner who had sent a summons demanding that the four youths accused of beating up the old woman appear before him.

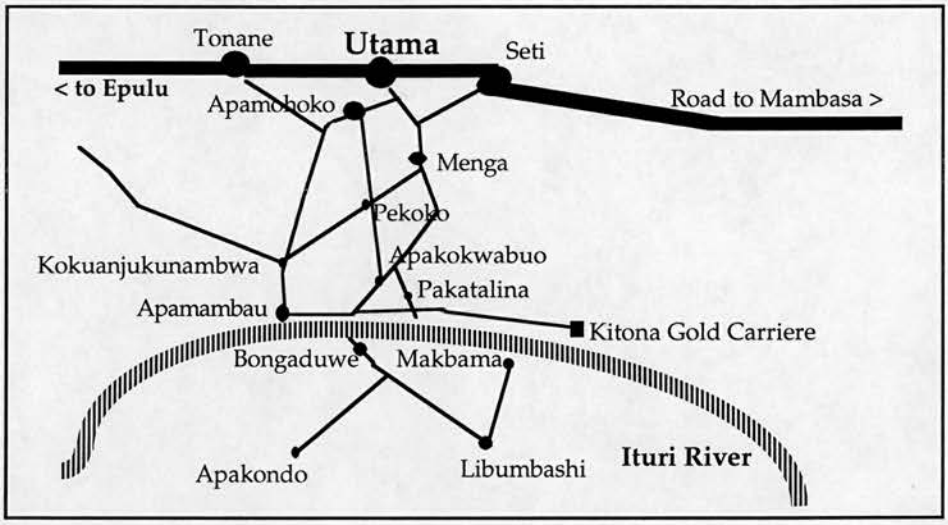
The first to arrive had the choice of which broken down huts to rebuild and the children in particular enjoyed racing in and out of the old huts. Many people would build new huts, and the more important question than which hut was where it would be. At this point people can realign closer to some and further from others. The realignment of residence, practised by Bila villagers every ten years or so when they move their village back to a former ancestral site, is re-enacted every few weeks as the Mbuti move their hunting camps. Thus instead of a race to secure the least dilapidated former hut, there was a slow process of establishing residence.

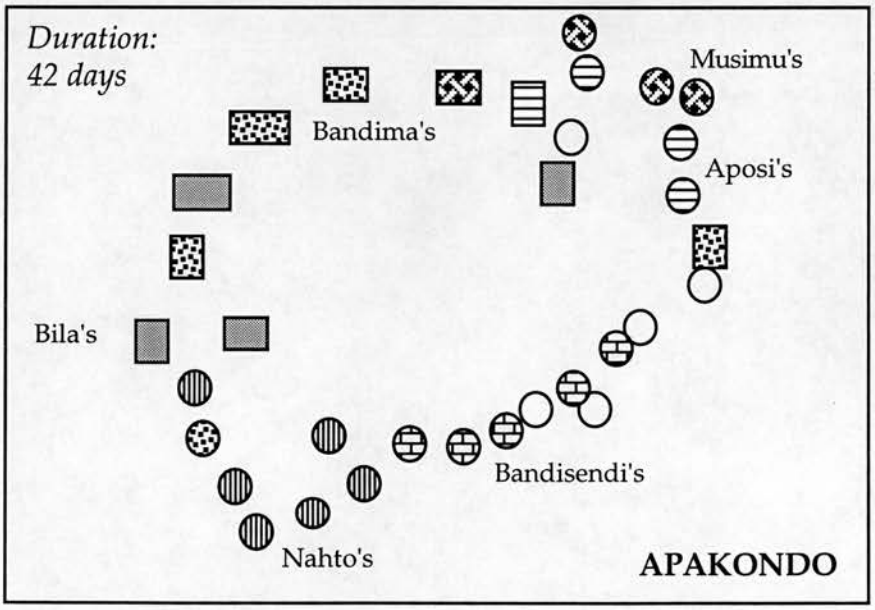
Za cleared the ground where their hut would be and his much younger wife, Masamba, had created a new hut within a few hours. The fact that he had chosen the place for the hut gave him a strong say in the realignment of relationships, the fact that she constructed it gave her the power to position the door facing towards whoever she felt friendly with and away from those she disliked. Pati and Telesa, friends of theirs from the same Mbuti band at Bandisendi, moved in next to them.

Changing residence patterns

The maps below chart the movement of the different sub-groups of the Mbuti associated with Utama, over a period from February to June. The territory of the

Fig 9. Changing Residence patterns





Numbers in camp increased rapidly success on the hunt diminished.

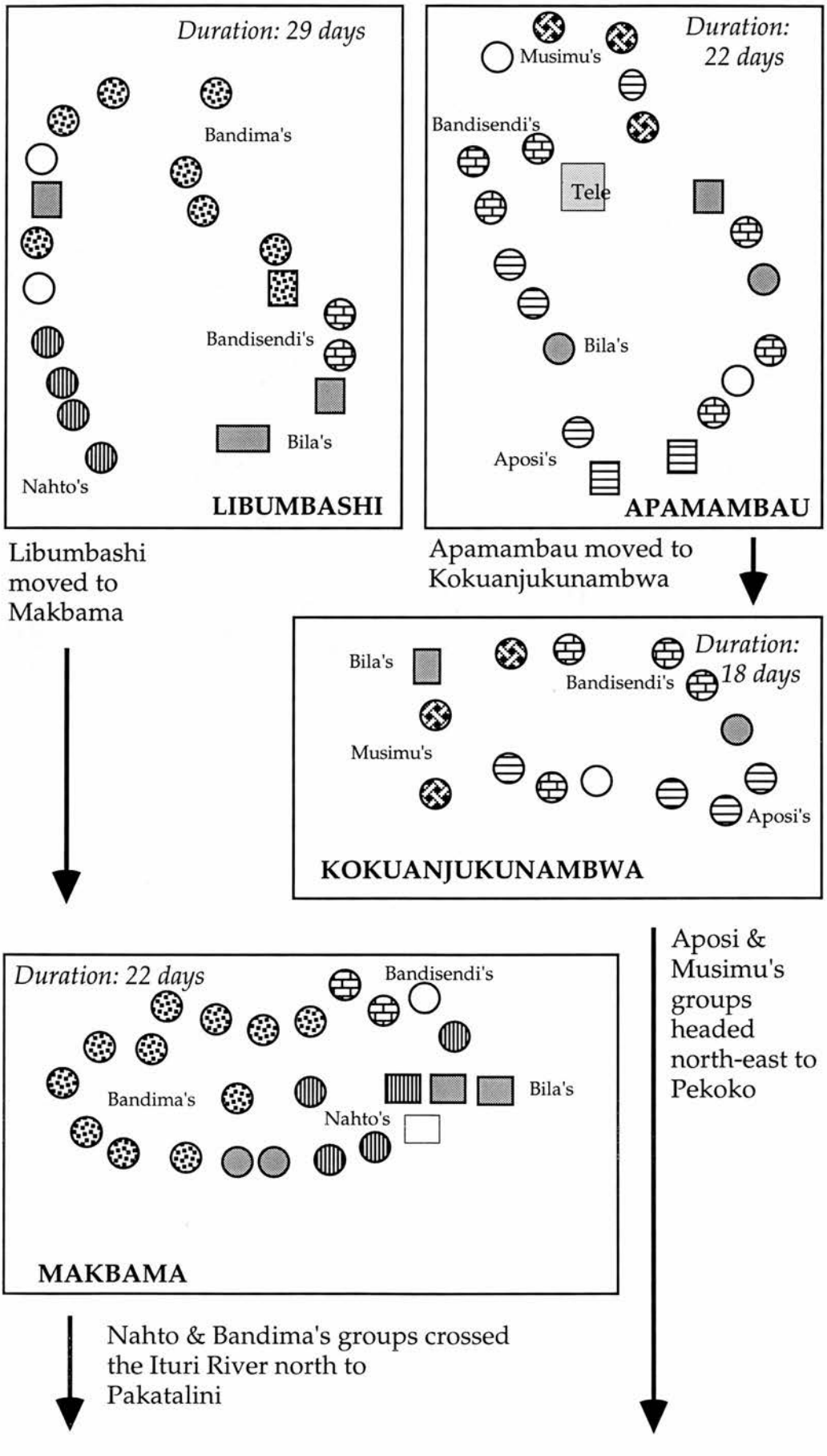
After six weeks Apakondo divided

Nahto & Bandima Groups moved to Libumbashi;

Aposi & Musimu Groups left for Apamambau

Nahto & Bandima's Groups moved to Libumbashi;

Aposi & Musimu's Groups left for Apamambau

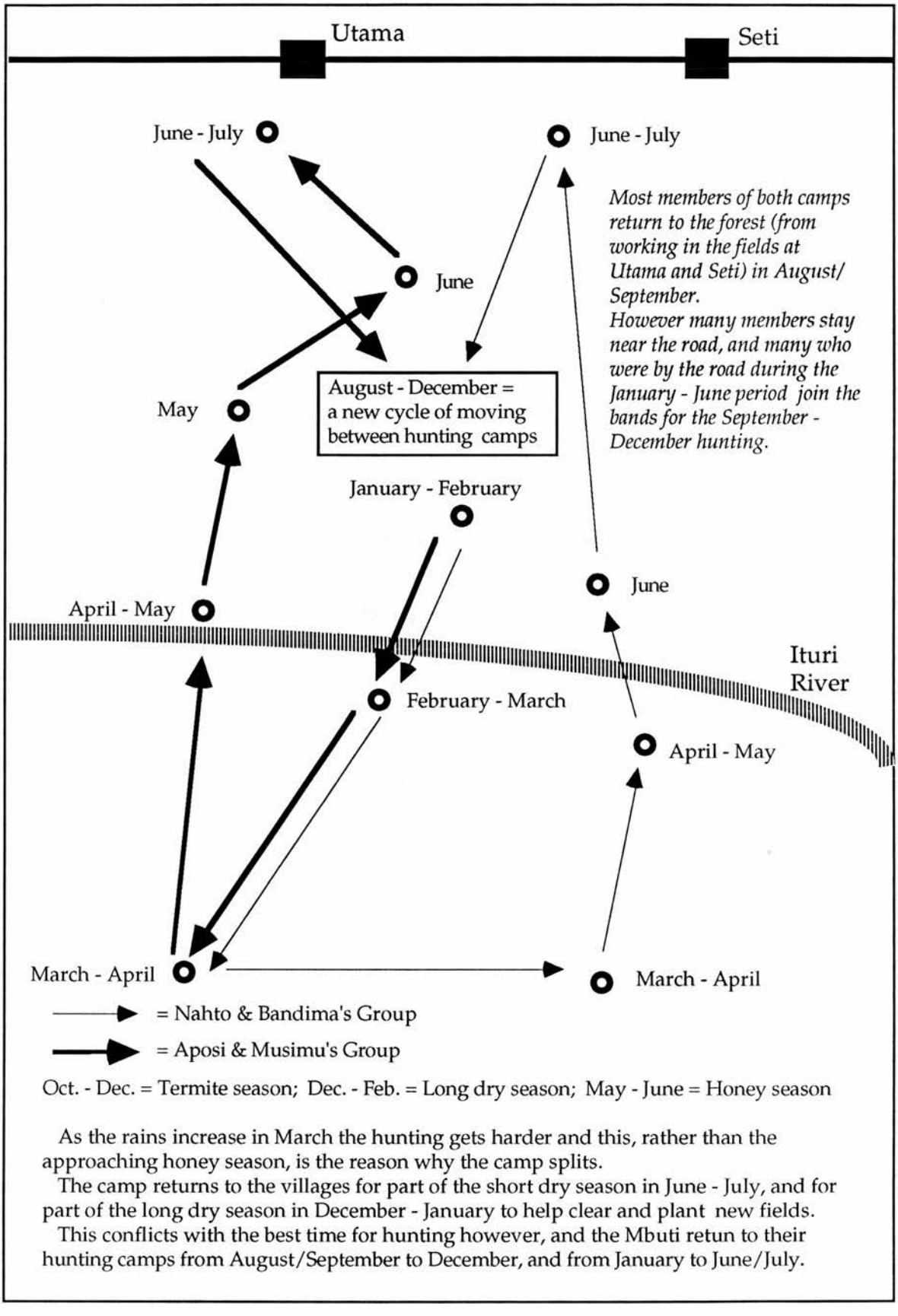

Duration: 29 days
Bandima's
Bandisendi's
Bila's
Nahto's
LIBUMBASHI
Duration: 22 days
Musimu's
Bandisendi's
Tele
Bila's
Aposi's
APAMAMBAU
Libumbashi moved to Makbama
Apamambau moved to Kokuanjukunambwa
Bila's
Bandisendi's
Duration: 18 days
Musimu's
Aposi's
KOKUANJUKUNAMBWA
Aposi & Musimu's groups headed north-east to Pekoko
Duration: 22 days
Bandisendi's
Bandima's
Bila's
Nahto's
MAKBAMA
Nahto & Bandima's groups crossed the Ituri River north to Pakatalini

band is bordered by the Bandisendi Mbuti to the west, by the Epulu river to the north, by the Mabukusi and Bandisolo Mbuti to the east, and by the Mbuti of the Teturi whose territory overlapped with the Utama Mbuti in this area south of the Ituri River. The chart does not follow the break up and merging of the groups over the whole year, nor does it detail the inhabitants of each hut, since it is intended simply to convey the importance of the sub-groups in camp formation. One should bear in mind that these are not rigid sub-groups but are flexible networks of kin and affines, and since most people are related to most others through more than one kinship connection, there is much more choice for the individual than may be apparent on the surface. The chart begins with a map of Apakondo: the camp to which the whole group moved after staying in Bongaduwé for a month from the middle of February.

The different sub-groups whose movements are charted on these maps, are as follows: Aposi's family; Nahto's family; Bandima's family (although he himself was absent, dying in the Mbuti camp near to Seti); and Musimu's group, which consists of her children and the children of Kanjalai who are related through kosono. Bandisendi is the general term used for those who belong to the Bandisendi group rather than to this group, and who (when the camp splits) also split themselves in order to move with whichever group they have the best relations through friendship or marriage. Lastly there are the Bila, who also split when the camp splits: Jean and Denis and the other villagers from Seti generally moving with those of Bandima's group since its roadside camp is near to both Jean and Seti; Bisaili and Banyé moving with Aposi and Musimu's groups whose village camps are near their homes in the centre of Utama.

It is interesting to note that the duration of time spent in each camp shortens as the rainy season increases. The net hunt relies on the forest being reasonably dry, and as numbers increased and the hunt became less successful, the camp first countered this by splitting and moving south deeper into the forest. By this strategy they intended to benefit from being in forest where the duiker were less disturbed by humans and initially were more plentiful. Then as the rains increased and the days hunting time decreased, the groups adopted a strategy of staying at each camp for shorter and shorter periods of time. Finally they had to move north so that the village fields became easier to reach from the hunting camps, and in this way they could supplement their diet by working in the village fields, since there was no longer a surplus of meat in the camps which could be exchanged with villagers for agricultural produce.

Fig. 10. Annual Cycle of the Mbuti Associated with Utama



Most members of both camps return to the forest (from working in the fields at Utama and Seti) in August/ September. However many members stay near the road, and many who were by the road during the January - June period join the bands for the September - December hunting.

Oct. - Dec. = Termite season; Dec. - Feb. = Long dry season; May - June = Honey season

As the rains increase in March the hunting gets harder and this, rather than the approaching honey season, is the reason why the camp splits.

The camp returns to the villages for part of the short dry season in June - July, and for part of the long dry season in December - January to help clear and plant new fields.

This conflicts with the best time for hunting however, and the Mbuti retun to their hunting camps from August/September to December, and from January to June/July.

The *Bélélé*

The very first night that the whole group arrived at Bongaduwé, the Bélélé, the spirit of the forest, arrived and Nahto spoke with it on behalf of the camp. The Bélélé was described as being a *Satani* (in KiSwahili) or *Kéti* (in KiMbuti/KiBila): an ancestor spirit, a spirit of the forest.

Case Study: Women representing the camp to the forest and ancestors

Nahto led the singing, with everyone (especially the children) singing the refrain: a repetitive eerie chanting that was very restrained, lacking any individual variation or exuberance. Using a stick, Nahto beat on the ground and called out to the spirit of the forest to come out and meet her. The Bélélé emerged out of the darkness of the forest at the edge of the camp: a figure totally covered in green leaves, moving very slowly in an inhuman jerky way. Nahto cried out to it, "you are always here when I come", and the Bélélé replied, "Imé kaku - I never die". She then called on it to bless the camp and to help the hunt to give us lots of animals; after which the figure disappeared into the pitch-black night forest, a host of children and youths following it, blundering through the forest and being thrashed by it. Za was nowhere to be seen until long after the event, and it was his son Ausa who helped lead the Bélélé, it seemed most likely that he was playing the part of the spirit of the forest/ancestors while his sister Nahto represented the camp.

When such *Bakéti* come into camps and bless both the camp and the hunt, the Bakéti often dance wildly and tear at huts. They are often covered in extraordinary points of light given off by the phosphorescence of decomposing plants. It is often an elder woman of the camp, although sometimes a man, who takes the lead role in addressing such spirits on behalf of the camp.

I will return to the story of this encounter (in Chapter 7) when I argue against the denigrated position one would have to ascribe to Mbuti women according to the arguments of Ortner (1974) and Collier and Rosaldo (1981). This will later (in Chapter 8) be balanced by evidence that Mbuti women can indeed be threatened or denigrated, but this will be seen to differ in kind from the more general rivalry between the sexes only in the context of the attempt by the Mbuti chief Yuma to assert hierarchy and domination over *everybody*. In the context of Yuma's assertion, the difference is a difference in kind for everybody and not simply for the women concerned. Yuma was only briefly present at any of the hunting camps, the rest of the time he stayed in the Mbuti camp of Apamohoko near to Utama. Here at Bongaduwé the most powerful people were Nahto, Za, their uncle the much older Aposi, and the equally old Musimu.

Case study: Women's dancing, sweeping out the Bélélé and the Nande

The morning after the Bélélé's visit Jean, one of the two villagers present, made one of his customary speeches seeking to command the Mbuti to hunt well and to not use any sorcery. There was some whooping of laughter at his abrasive tone, and the women started clearing the central area of the camp that was still overgrown, leaving a patch in the centre uncut where the basket containing offerings of manioc for the molimo trumpet hung off a stick, and where small children enjoyed playing at hunting animals with old pieces of hunting nets, using sticks for spears. The women stuffed large leaves in their loincloths: the leaves hanging all around like a skirt or hanging behind like a tail. In a single shuffling line behind the mischievous looking Nahto they stamped in accompaniment to their song as they beat all the homes and the whole camp with bunches of leaves held in both hands: sweeping out the spirit of the night before. The wild whooping and hysterical laughter continued, sweeping out Jean's speech as well.

The younger unmarried men did not have their own huts, but slept either in a hut for youths or in relatives huts. Older men who's wives had died never built domed huts but either occupied and mended abandoned huts or built makeshift square ones. Other older men, like Aposi, whose wives were absent from camp, would sleep in the younger unmarried men's hut if they were too late in arriving to claim an abandoned hut. Kanjalai slept either by the central singing fire, or in the hut of one of his children.

Case study: Women's work done by invisible men

My wife, Eva, had been stung on both hands by bees, so I was the one who did most of the building of our *endu* (domed hut) next to our tent. Kanjalai helped, and was untroubled by the fact that this was supposed to be women's work. Later in the day it was Eva, and not Kanjalai or myself, who was complimented by everybody on her hut. Similarly, long after Eva had returned to Europe and I was helping the women beat the duiker towards the hunting nets, they all insisted on jokingly calling me "Éva", since this was women's work I was doing.

For an adult man, marriage is a prerequisite for having ones own hut, since in theory it is the women who build them. For a woman, it is a prerequisite to accessing the meat procured by her husbands net. Thus their shared cooking fire symbolises the marriage: the ability to cook ones own food, to demand and offer food from; and the place to speak from and socialise at. This division of male and female roles is seen as essential ideologically,

however much the women are essential to the hunt, and however much the men help in the building of the huts, in practice.

The Net Hunt and the Forest

If the forest is dry and the hunters are sufficiently galvanised by discussion or by the molimo the night before, the hunt will start early in the morning. Several of the younger hunters, or possibly an older hunter whose advice has been accepted concerning which direction to hunt in, will set off slightly earlier than the others and build a small hunting fire: either a few hundred yards from camp if the hunt is to begin nearby, or once they have reached the area the hunt is to take place in. They will mark the way for those who follow; and as soon as the first hunter has left camp carrying a smouldering log to light the fire with, he will begin singing to the forest as he seeks to establish a peaceful state of mind and a peaceful relationship with the forest.

The mornings hunting fire having been lit, the others will gradually arrive and the men will sit near to the fire passing round taba, joking or telling stories of earlier hunts, and some of the men may mark their faces with charcoal from the fire, the fire being seen as a blessing and the charcoal as a sign of this. The women will sit separately either by their own fire or close to the men, and there is often good humoured but highly charged banter back and forth between the men and women. Small boys will be with the men, and girls with the women; but young couples often sit together to one side with their infants. This pattern is repeated many times throughout the day as everyone comes together after each cast of the nets: lighting a fire or having just a brief pause before the next cast of the nets. During these pauses the stories of animals that have been caught and the ones that got away are told and re-told (as they will be later in camp), with re-enactments and a great deal of humour directed at individual hunters and at the animals themselves. The conversation is often raucous and loud, and in sharp contrast to the silence that follows as the women head off to circle round the area, getting ready to double back towards the men waiting by their hunting nets; the women beating the undergrowth to scare the antelope towards the semi-circle of nets.

John Hart has described these pauses as "an important time to flirt and visit, to play with babies, and to discuss the next drive" (1978: 337). During a typical pause in the hunt sweet potatoes were roasted in the fire, some men hacked into a nearby fallen tree, searching for an *njiko* (a small forest animal), and other men climbed a tree in search of honey.

Meanwhile some of the women looked for mbuti (forest mushrooms)[14]; and the rest sat around near their own fire where two women re-enacted a moment in the hunt.

Case study: Re-enacting ambivalent relations between humans and animals

Mapaulo - a childless young woman who's husband had died, and one of the only people to demonstrate any affection towards the camps hunting dogs - played at being an antelope attempting to escape and then, using branches to symbolise the animal, she caught it and cut its throat, with appropriately blood curdling sounds. Then Nahto's daughter, Alieti, joined in: chasing Mapaulo madly though the undergrowth around the fire. The chase ended up with the 'hunter' demanding that the 'animal' brought her fire ('pika na isa'). The animal was reluctant but eventually agreed, and each time she agreed the hunter would just walk off rather than accept the fire, to the hysterical amusement of all those around.

The performance played on the ambivalent relation between humans and animals, especially since Mapaulo was the one person in camp who crossed the boundary from hounding to befriending the hunting dogs. The humour lay not simply in the idea that an animal bringing fire to humans was preposterous, but also in the fact that its gift and therefore friendship was being refused. There followed a huge humorous fight between the two and this time it was the animal who in effect won and walked off, sticking out her backside and farting at everyone as she strode off.

These stories of animals outwitting, or being outwitted by, hunters are highly entertaining, but also display a strong degree of identification with the animals. They involve people re-enacting the movements and feelings of the hunters and the animals in very similar terms: both the hunter and the animal are within the performance, moving through the forest in an equally alert fashion. The storyteller in camp will move between giving a running commentary on the story and being the voice of each character in it. His or her body taking on the appearance and movement of the hunter and the animal with equal intensity, and with equal respect for their abilities. At a highly practical level the stories are a form of active evaluation of the forest and the hunt, and they also teach listening children about the nature of different animals. One little girl was so enraptured that, believing the hunt was happening before her very eyes, she cried out "if you go and put the net there in that place then you'll catch it"!

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14 Interestingly, *mbuti* is primarily used as a word for forest mushrooms but its broader meaning includes anything which comes from the forest. It is often used by villagers to mean the meat which they hope to acquire from the Mbuti; but it can also mean not only mushrooms but forest roots, fish, and any other forest produce.

Plate 5. **On the Net Hunt**

When the pause during the hunt is over - the sweet potatoes eaten, and the story finished - the women head off carrying their baskets which they hope to fill with the animals caught in their husbands or male relatives nets. They circle silently round to the far side of the area in which they hope there are antelope, and wait for the men to finish setting up their nets. If the women have a dog or two with them to help search out and scare the nocturnal duiker from their hiding places in the undergrowth, then its wooden bell will be stuffed with leaves so that it moves quietly with them. The hunting nets, which the men carry in a big circular coiled mass hanging from their shoulders or from their heads, are between three and four feet high, and from 100 - 300 feet long. At every cast, each hunter will advance one place up the line towards the lead position and so be able to determine exactly where they place their net. This means that at each cast each hunter will position their net at a different point in the semi-circle. This is important since, in my experience, the first hunter to place his net gets as close as he can to the area of dense undergrowth in which the duiker are likely to be hiding, and he therefore stands a better chance of catching one in his net. This is supported by Hewlett who, in describing the Aka net hunt, says that

> The first nets set up on the left or right of centre generally have the best chance of capturing game since the hunters with these nets have longer time to get deeper into the centre of the [undergrowth]. . . (Hewlett 1977: 41)

In direct contrast to this Ichikawa (1983), in a study of hunting using ten nets, has argued that the four nets placed opposite the beating line caught 52 per cent of the animals. However, whether the hunters believe they will be more successful if they are the first to set up their nets to one side of the centre, or if they set them up later in the centre, they are well aware that adopting successively different positions in the semi-circle does not ensure that hunters catch the same amount. Changing positions is more of a symbolic statement of equality and co-operation, and the more important reality of that co-operation is evident in the sharing of food among both hunters and non-hunters back in camp. Ichikawa argues that "[a]s far as *individual* hunters are concerned net hunting is neither a stable nor reliable method of procuring meat" (1983: 68, emphasis added). As a co-operative enterprise, however, it would appear to offer great security.

The nets are hung from saplings by a twist of the rope around the broken point of the sapling or branch, and they are weighed down by pieces of fallen dead wood or termite mound. Women and children often help in setting up the nets, although this is more true of those nets being set up first since this still gives the women and children enough time to circle round to their beating position opposite the semi-circle of nets. When the nets are ready there will be quiet animal calls between the men and then at a signal (an arm clap, whistle, shout or animal call) the women will start shouting and advancing, beating the

undergrowth to scare the small duiker towards the nets. Short whistles indicate that an animal is approaching and tell the waiting hunters to remain still and silent. Loud noise erupts after an animal has passed, and often the men will have positioned themselves within the capture area and will themselves attempt to scare any duiker into running straight at their net and getting entangled in it. If they *think* that other duiker are in the area then they will run and kill the one that is in their net silently, if they *hear* other duiker then they will shout to other hunters: directing them to catch and kill it before it escapes from the net.

The beating and shouting to frighten the nocturnal duiker from their hiding places is a peculiar long moment of great commotion in the forest, during which nothing may be happening apart from humans making as much noise as they can, (since there may not in fact be any duiker in the vicinity). However, once a duiker rushes into the barely visible net then it is quickly killed and placed in the basket, and will not be divided up until the group returns to camp. Turnbull found that

> The moment of killing is best described as a moment of intense compassion and reverence. The fun that is sometimes subsequently made of the dead animal, particularly by the youths, appears to be almost a nervous reaction, and there is an element of fear in their behaviour. (1965: 161)

Although respect for the forest itself is evident in the molimo and in the calm period that follows each cast of the nets, the moment of killing was full of joy at the good fortune of the hunt having succeeded, of having been blessed by the forest/ancestors. Although the jokes may have been nervous reaction, the stories told and retold in the camp in the evening always had, as one of their high points, a graphic rendition of the sound and movements of the struggling and dying animal. In fact four years before writing the above passage, Turnbull described the killing of duikers which clearly involved no reverence, compassion or fear whatsoever; but instead involved joking and mockery in which "one of them kicked the torn and bleeding body" (1961: 95). He states that "it was at times like this that I found myself furthest removed from the pygmies"(1961: 95). Thus the story Turnbull tells changes slightly over time between 1961 and 1965; and the change is towards polarising the experience of the peaceful Mbuti and the fearful Bila: a distorting opposition between the poles which are indeed present, but present *among* the Bila and the Mbuti, not *between* them.

After each cast, the nets are gathered and everyone gradually heads on to the next meeting point. It is at this time that there is almost always a strong sense of calm and contentment with people singing different songs quietly to themselves and singing "Ituri-o" to the forest. There is a stark contrast between the commotion, noise and desire to catch an animal in ones own net, and these songs sung to the forest and the ancestors in good humour. As

they move off towards the next cast they will be keeping an eye open for signs of roots, mushrooms, and honey; and pointing out, to children and to each other, changes happening in the forest. In the Ituri there are large areas which are open *mbau* forest (the *Gilbertiodendron* monospecific forest Bahuchet wrote of, 1991a). Mbau do not allow other trees to grow beneath them so there is not a dense undergrowth, and moving through such areas is easy. It is in the denser areas of mixed forest that the duiker tend to hide: so although one can pass through mbau with ease, it is when the hunting group begins to move along the twisting paths through pockets or large areas of mixed forest, and then finally starts to move into areas of the densest thickets, that one has the best chance of finding duiker.

Attempts in camp to improve the hunt occur on three levels. On the individual level black paste mixed in the horn of an antelope is put on the net, as are pieces of hair, and any other lucky charms.

Case Study: Za's lucky charm

One morning Za and his wife Masamba, slit the front of their tongues and spat blood onto their hunting net, which was hanging on a branch just off the ground. Then they lit a fire under it for the smoke to purify the net: the flames leapt up, and Ausa was only just in time to leap forward and save the net from catching fire. There was much laughter from those around, and the day continued as it had begun with Za having no luck on the hunt.

On the second level there is the *endékélélé*, a small spirit house that is sometimes built just outside the camp and where food offerings are made collectively by all the hunters to ensure a good hunt. Lastly there are the interactions with the forest/ancestors in the form of remonstrating, dialoguing and singing with the molimo, and with the other forms the forest/ancestors assume, such as the Bélélé.

Evening in Camp

A few people always stay behind in camp: this may include a few of the older people, some small children, anyone who is ill, or a hunter has had a bad dream and so would bring bad luck to the hunt. Normally there will be at least one or two Bila villagers in camp hoping to recover some of the debt which is owing them: the meat being smoked on racks to preserve it. They hope to receive meat in exchange for the agricultural produce they have given out over the previous days or weeks in order to ensure that they, rather than their rival villagers, get hold of the meat once the hunt is successful. Bisaili explained that the gifts of tobacco and cannabis, or advances of rice, which villagers gave out to Mbuti were like the

gifts a husband gives to a prospective wife: it promises more and shows that the promise will be kept. The total amount owed to villagers on a typical day equalled one hundred and forty four glasses, or more than half a basket load, of rice; much of which might never be repaid.

From the middle of the afternoon the Mbuti left in camp will start making a two-tone two-hoot call to the returning hunters. The men will cut up animals just out of sight: whoever cuts the animal must not eat any of it. If the hunt has been successful then there will be haggling with the villagers over who owes who what, and although the animal belongs to whoever caught it in their net, there will inevitably be a sharing out of food as people make silent or noisy demands on each other that are difficult to refuse. The division does not follow exact rules and so there is often much argument over who should receive what. The noisy enthusiasm with which the argument is entered into, does not seem to match the much lower actual concern people express once the division has been made. The stark exception was often the older woman Ésidi who often seemed to lose out, and had an increasingly uneasy relationship with the rest of the group. By contrast, other elders were usually offered the liver: it is the preferred food offering to the ancestors, on account of it being the seat of feeling (just as the heart is for Western people), and because it is easy to chew and digest.

After a *buré* (KiSwahili: empty, useless) or exhausting hunt, the mood on the return to camp is often very loud, argumentative and confrontational. The volatile and almost violent mood contrasts sharply with the calm and rejoiceful singing as they gather their hunting nets at the end of a cast, and move on to the next place to hunt. If the final cast is close to camp then the mood switch between individuals at home in their forest environment and individuals in conflict in camp can be very sudden. The angry, confused, shouting and complaining mood is often entered into with great gusto. The mood in camp lifts as people eat, and the camp fills with evening talk around the family fires just outside their huts, or the fires which groups of hunters share, and much later the focus shifts to the shared central fires when the singing gradually begins.

Cannabis is often smoked at the end of the day just before sunset and the evening meal. After the adult who has contributed the cannabis has taken one or two deep inhalations, it is passed around all the adults who wish to take part. If there is any left over it is passed on to the youngsters. There is disagreement between Anne Putnam, the wife of the anthropologist Patrick Putnam, who stated that "you can almost spot abandoned campsites of the little people by the marijuana crop that springs up when they leave" (1954: 162; cited

in Hewlett 1977: 88); and Turnbull who, in a letter to Barry Hewlett, stated that the net hunters do not smoke cannabis in the forest (Hewlett 1977: 90). The discrepancy between these two views may simply be the result of informants preferences. Certainly Turnbulls primary informant, Kengé, does not like cannabis (although he loves alcohol); and Za, reputedly the best hunter at Bongaduwé, thought that cannabis was buré (rubbish) since it ruined ones ability on the hunt. Others, particularly the younger hunters such as Bon Anné and Komie, and elders such as Aima, Salé and Kausé could never get enough cannabis. If there was any pattern to who disliked cannabis it would appear to be the adult generation: those who were primarily responsible for the hunt and who had children who were old enough to hunt themselves The smokers were primarily the elders, youths and newly married young hunters.

On some occasions when Yuma was in camp there would be a meal for all the men in which the different households contributed meat, rice, manioc, or plantain, and the men would all sit in the centre of the camp together and share the meal. Preceding one such meal some of the young hunters indulged in nkumbi whipping with a sapling that had been stripped towards the end making a long strand that would snap around the body being whipped. Nobody was forced to take part, but many young hunters appeared to do so to prove themselves; and the person doing the whipping would immediately be whipped in turn by another, and so on. This meal, involving only the men, seemed to anticipate the nkumbi that was going to take place in the village.

Normally, however, there was no chief attempting to assert his power, and instead there were arguments, laughter and story telling: stoned or otherwise. Under normal circumstances eating would happen in smaller groups: either consisting simply of nuclear families (some of whom would include a few other adults and/or children), or in groups in which the men and women would eat separately but close to each other; and sometimes the women would bring a group of hunters the meat and garden produce (usually sweet potatoes, rice, bananas or manioc) to where they might be sitting by the central fire. If, as often happens, all the meat has been destined for exchange with villagers, then only the head, neck and entrails of the animals are due to the hunter. These will then be cooked, normally by the women; the liver, and often the heart, being given to the elders. For a long while Za had great luck on the hunt, and then it was his neighbour Pati's turn, which meant that they had enough meat to eat and exchange without having to make demands on others, and instead they were in a position to invite others to eat with them.

Pati's toddler would run to Pati when he was upset and crying, since Pati tended to sing to him and hold him while getting on with mending a net or talking with friends, whereas Ikalabo (Pati's wife) tended to scold him. The toddlers often visited other people, and would often be fed elsewhere. When they were slightly older they would spend much of their time together devising games.

Case Study: Children's co-operative games

One day I taught them how to play boules, throwing a round nut away from us and getting the children to stand by me and throw their nuts to see who could get closest to the original one. When I returned a short while later they were still playing but were now in a circle, all rolling their nuts whenever they wanted, and picking up the nuts that rolled towards them to use themselves: totally unconcerned about competing with each other but intent on their task. The competition, which I had assumed was inherent in the game, had given way to a circular co-operation that mirrored in shape and spirit the peculiar combination of individual striving and collective support which the children needed to learn in order to engage effectively on the hunt.

One of the older women - Musimu or Nahto - would often have the whole camp in hysterics with a lively performance about their own and others sexuality. Musimu could dance an amazingly lithe dance, wearing nothing but a tiny strip of cloth between her legs, folded over a string vine around her waist. Her performances involved such things as bizarre altercations with empty baskets that were too heavy to lift, or simply moving strangely and engaging in a monologue accompanied by gestures which were sudden and arresting as she would leapt on comments shouted to her from the women gathered around her in hysterics. As one such performance ended, the molimo trumpet called out from the forest, circling close to the camp, accompanied by shouts and the sound of the ground being beaten the way the women do when they are beating an animal towards the nets. Ndume stood in camp with his spear pointing in its direction, and then rushed into the forest towards it, shouting that the *nyama n'endula* (the animal of the forest) was arriving.

The molimo mirroring the Hunt

Hunting songs involving the whole camp, and without the molimo trumpet, occur just as often as the molimo singing. On these occasions the harmony is broken up into separate notes, with each person carrying a single note for each line of harmony, in such a way that the tune cannot happen unless each person sings their note. The sound is like domino's falling round and round the central fire: the note a person carries varies from refrain to refrain, while each refrain of the song involves the same order of voices passing the

harmony round the fire. This form of evening singing happened when the young hunters were relaxing and the molimo trumpet was not likely to arrive: for the trumpet required the disappearance of the young hunters who would reappear as the molimo.

The whole process of peoples involvement in the molimo at night is very similar to their involvement in the hunt. The molimo trumpet is normally a long hollowed out tree, and is carried into camp at night by the young male hunters. It is considered to be the voice of the forest (which is also the ancestors) which arrives of its own accord at the edge of the camp, hidden by the darkness and the trees. It comes into camp once the villagers, the women and children are in their huts: approaching with an extraordinarily haunting sound that slips between human singing, animal calls and its own eerie full sound. Sometimes, though, it arrives quietly and calls meekly, humorously; in a voice that is said to be the voice of the molimo but would appear to be more like the molimo's 'fool'. It adopts a strange high-pitched mocking tone, and makes jokes with the camp as a whole and with individuals, scolding and taunting people, and making demands for food, cannabis or tobacco.

The nature of this moment mirrors the light-heartedness of the men and women sitting apart near the hunting fire before heading off to hunt. During this period preceding the molimo's arrival, women will often call out to the 'fool', and there is a lot of bantering and humour. Gradually as the atmosphere becomes serious some of the older women, who may still be sitting by the central fire with the men, may ask the molimo to bless the hunt and make it good. After this, usually with the women having left, the men engage with the *nyama n'endula* as it enters the camp, and the singing begins in earnest. This stage would appear to mirror the hunt itself; a mirroring that was also evident in the earlier description of the molimo approaching the camp to the sound of people beating the ground, and evident in Ndumé's rushing out with his spear as if to kill it.

The bantering stage tends to happen if there is nobody singing in camp: if it is the molimo which is initiating the singing and the ritual, and only if it is entering camp to improve the hunt rather than to settle more serious issues of disharmony such as major conflicts or a death in camp. Often this stage is missed out, and the singing in camp has either long been underway before the molimo approaches, or begins as the molimo is heard approaching from a distance. The singing usually moves back and forth between being led by a succession of individuals, and following group patterns of song.

Case Study: Salé and the molimo singing

One evening the singing began by following a customary pattern, and then one man, Salé, struck out alone. For a long while he held sway and the voice of the molimo trumpet simply growled and echoed his voice. Salé's strong, very individual rough voice, was sometimes too difficult for the other singers to follow. It was as if he was on a path through the thickets of the forest and had passed through a patch too dense for the others; covering distances of harmony at such a leap it often left everyone else falling behind into silence or dissonance. When the rest managed to catch up was when they reached the best thicket: the individual voice subsided into the group pattern, just as when the leading hunter has set up his net and the others follow suit. The harmony was powerful, always sounding as if it was on the edge of chaos. The singers are unable to see each other in the dark just as they are unable to see each other in the dense forest when they are co-operating on the hunt. The dense thickets of difficult harmonies - combining such individual parts - seemed to mirror the tangled thickets that are difficult to pass through in the forest; and which are the very places where the duiker will be hiding.

At this point the molimo's voice and Sale's voice re-emerged strongly, and there was in effect a duel by voice between the hunter and the hunted. Both seemed to be hunting each other, challenging each other, following each other - their paths covering a breadth of possible sound and each having found its quarry. With neither able to overwhelm the other, soon all the rest of the voices joined in. The singing then became easier as each person followed their part, but kept in touch with the overall harmony; and the molimo itself was much more of a partner than an adversary.

This part of the singing reflected the period of the hunt which follows the attempt to beat the duiker out of the thicket:: as the hunters gather up their nets and sing their own songs to the forest, moving alone towards the next meeting place, the mood being always very relaxed and contented. In the same sense the singing at this point can move into a long period of relaxed creativity where the singers are not straining to follow or equal the molimo's song but are much more individually experimental. This period normally either continues until the molimo returns to the forest, or continues until another cast of the nets is made: whether that is by the hunters singing with renewed vigour, or by the molimo trumpet taking on a threatening air and sounding as if it is tracking them down.

In part, the molimo singing is a preparation for the following days hunt: through establishing harmony with the forest/ancestors in the form of the molimo; and through re-establishing a heightened ability to co-operate in singing sometimes predictable, but often

uniquely created harmonies which require heightened empathy if they are not to fall into chaos. In another sense the molimo singing is the hunt happening in camp. Instead of following predictable pathways on the ground through the forest, or creating pathways, individually and collectively, through untrodden areas to reach the thickets where the nyama would be; in the molimo singing they create, follow, invent, cross and recross, pathways of harmony. The evening of Salé's singing, the animal of the forest (*nyama n'endula*), as the molimo is called, had arrived at the edge of the camp, had tracked us down, and had come in to the central fire, reminding us that we are quarry too.

CHAPTER 7 REFLECTIONS IN THE MOLIMO POOL: Theoretical considerations and implications

This chapter explores the implications of the molimo and the net hunt discussed in the previous chapter. Theoretical questions concerning human-environmental relations, the nature of work, the "irreducible core of ritual", and the inevitability of gender inequality, are considered in the light of the very different ways in which the Mbuti experience their relationship with their environment. A relationship which is misunderstood if interpreted within a Western emphasis on transcendence and control.

Standing in the huge footprint of an elephant who had been drinking at the stream near the hunting camp, I leant down to wash. Through the water, under the overhanging bank of the stream, I saw the basket that normally hangs in the centre of the camp, full of offerings to the molimo, and saw the long trumpet itself. Standing in footprints that were not my own, seeing the voice of the forest and ancestors slumbering beneath the waters out of reach of daylight, I wondered whether this imprint of human activity and belief was as much a part of the forest as the elephant print I was standing in.

This has led me to consider the writing of those who argue that rituals such as the molimo inevitably involve an attempt to control the environment, and involve an attempt by men to assert their superiority over women; and the writing of those who argue that activity such as the net hunt can be understood as the expropriation of resources from the environment. In this chapter I will be addressing these related issues through the central question of transcendence. To what extent is it accurate to describe Mbuti-forest relations in terms of transcendence? Do they economically and cosmologically perceive themselves as intervening in the forest as if from outside, or, conversely, do they seek to secure the blessings of a forest which is perceived to be an independently existing transcendent entity?

THE MOLIMO: GENDER, NATURE AND RITUAL

At the beginning of the molimo singing (just as at the beginning of the hunt) the men and women are normally separated. While the women and children are in the huts, it is the men who are out in the middle of the camp singing by the molimo fire. This separation would appear to support Collier and Rosaldo's argument that women are subordinate to men among the Mbuti: "Pygmy men, but not women, secure the transcendent support of the forest" (1981: 301). However it is just as likely to be women who "secure the transcendent support of the forest". It is also just as likely to be women who make sustained speeches

from their own fires or from the centre of the camp. That it is only the men who sing with the molimo relates to the fact that the molimo singing is a re-presentation of the hunt itself. As has been shown earlier, in relation both to the hunt and to home building, the conceptual division of roles between men and women is central. Although conceptually central it is not an unequal division, as is evident in the fact that men can take on women's roles and women can take on men's roles without it being seen as demeaning, rather it is simply not 'seen' at all. In the following chapter the interaction of Nahto with the molimo is central to the relationship between the camp and the forest, just as it was central to her securing the blessing of the Bélélé spirit. Likewise Nahto's sister, Mahdo, dialogued with the molimo when it entered camp one afternoon in an attempt to cure a village woman of possession; and another time it was Mahdo who, representing the camp, demanded of the molimo to make the hunt good and "look after its children".

Women then, are clearly seen to represent the camp to the forest at least as effectively as the men. The fact that, when it comes to singing with the molimo, it is the men (and primarily the men of the local band rather than men from adjoining bands), and not the women, who carry it into camp and engage with it in song points to a difference which could be seen to suggest men's pre-eminence but actually simply restates the difference between men's and women's roles in the hunt itself.

The approach of Ortner, Collier and Rosaldo is continued in a different vein by other writers such as Maurice Bloch. Bloch's analysis of song (especially 1989: 43-45) suggests that in the ritual context song is one strand in a bundle of ritual activities - including song, dance and particular ways of speaking - which limit peoples ability to express themselves and instead assert traditional authority and an ideology which supports the position of those in power. This understanding of the molimo ritual would assume that domination is at the heart of the process; an assumption also made by Collier and Rosaldo in terms of gender relations.

Before moving on to look at the misconception of the forest as transcendental, and then at the implications of Bloch's analysis, I would like to address the heart of Collier and Rosaldo's argument which is as follows:

> "Sexual asymmetry" - a basic imbalance in the nature and organization of obligations and the availability of public reward - is in the base of productive relations in very simple societies. . . . This asymmetry lies in the fact that although women's gathering or gardening and men's hunting both contribute needed foods to the diet, women are required to feed families, whereas men distribute their meat through the group according to rules favoring members of the senior generation. These rules, associated with brideservice, permit all adult men to appear as the forgers of social relationships. (1981: 281)

Their emphasis on inequality is partly based on prioritising men's language and saying that because men speak in a certain way, then the inequality their language points to exists. For example, when they speak of marriage as "a male achievement" (1981: 280), or say that men speak of brother/sister exchange "in terms of male-male marital exchanges" (1981: 280), that is certainly how men can describe them. It is also how anthropologists often describe them. Lévi-Strauss, drawing on Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands, described the relationship between marriage partners there very differently to the way Annette Weiner would almost twenty years later:

> the total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman . . .but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1949: 115).

Just because male anthropologists mostly talk with male informants and express brother/sister exchange in phrases such as "men having exchanged sisters often live together" (Terashima 1985: 114; cited in Bahuchet 1991a: 211), it would be misleading to think that this reflects anything other than a male view of the situation. In a similar way women describe these exchanges from their own point of view, and siblings who are engaging in such exchanges describe them from yet another point of view. Thus brother/sister exchange is not a "male achievement" but is an exchange entered into by autonomous individuals. As Collier and Rosaldo themselves point out: "marriages, like all social relationships in brideservice societies, depend, ultimately, on the co-operative commitment of potentially autonomous individuals, whose ongoing connections require acknowledgement of one another's independent needs" (1981: 297).

Another problem in attempting to apply Collier and Rosaldo's assumption of asymmetrical gender relations to the Mbuti is that the distribution of meat, which they argue is governed solely by men, is more often governed by who a particular family is sharing with, by the need to give certain parts to elders (both male and female) and by the need to respond to demands. Meat is acquired through the work of both men and women, and is publicly acknowledged as such in the stories that retell the hunting. Although meat has been obtained co-operatively in the hunt, an antelope belongs to the family whose net it was caught in, and thus though there is sharing out through demand-sharing in order to meet the needs of those with next to nothing, this is not to establish hierarchy but a way of ensuring that all eat reasonably well. Likewise their argument, that "women are required to feed families, whereas men distribute their meat through the group according to rules favouring members of the senior generation" (1981: 281), is inapplicable. This senior generation includes both men and women, and the starch which Collier and Rosaldo are assuming is obtained through women's gathering is, in the hunting camps, obtained mostly

through the exchange of meat with villagers (see also Hewlett 1996: 223): and those who are best able to manipulate those exchanges are most often women such as Nahto.

However the central problem with their argument is in the assumption that the molimo, the forest, the ancestors, are 'transcendental'. Collier and Rosaldo are not simply making a statement about gender relations among the Mbuti; they are basing this on a misreading of the way in which the Mbuti relate to the environment. That environment is not a transcendent higher power, separate from themselves - nor is it the thing people in the West call 'nature', which is normally seen as separate and lower than ourselves - which rituals such as the molimo are intended to gain access to or control. In arguing in this vein they fall into the same trap Sherry Ortner (1974) fell into in identifying men with the transcendent and in seeing rituals (such as the molimo) as ways of controlling the environment which reflects men's control over women. Ortner conjures up an image at the end of her essay which sums up her argument: "we may envision culture in this case as a small clearing within the forest of the larger natural system" (1974: 85). The implication being that we have to continually struggle against nature to keep an area clear for culture, and that this is analogous to universal male/ female relations: man as culture seeing himself as having to control women as nature "since culture must maintain control over its (pragmatic and symbolic) mechanisms for the conversion of nature into culture" (1974: 87)[15].

Yet this opposition reflects neither Mbuti cosmology nor their lived experience. This is obvious in such simple things as the nature of the forest clearing itself, where there is a continuity between the camp and the forest. The idea of there being a sharp line between the clearing and the forest is not borne out at night when it is the male youths who bring the spirit of the forest into the camp. Nor is it true during the day when the camp continues indefinitely into the forest in the form of people chopping wood, fetching water, cutting saplings for huts or smoke racks, hiding the molimo basket full of manioc or other food offerings in a nearby stream, interacting with the Bélélé spirit. The continuity between the world of humans and the world of nature is evident in the nature of the hunt, the molimo, and in beliefs about the forest, beliefs which will be examined more thoroughly in the following chapter; but which for now could be summed up in the image that the forest is alive in the form of the ancestors who are themselves the ancestors of all who are alive

15 Jordanova has stressed the role of science and medicine as mediators of our ideas of nature, culture and gender; pointing out that the identification of men with culture and women with nature gained the status of scientific truth through the development of medical science. In the eighteenth century "a struggle was imagined inside each individual: between those elements that were thought to be masculine - reason and intelligence - and those which were thought to be feminine - the passions and the emotions" (1980: 63).

today - both human and other creatures - so there is not the division between humans and the rest of nature upon which Ortner and many others base their notion of a universal opposition between culture and nature, with ritual being seen as always being about the attempt to impose control on nature (1974: 72). Marilyn Strathern argues that this opposition between culture and nature can never be fixed, it's meaning varies enormously, both between cultures and within them; thus there is "no consistent dichotomy, only a matrix of contrasts" (1980: 177). For the Hagener "there is no culture, in the sense of the cumulative works of man, and no nature to be tamed and made productive . . . the intervening metaphor of culture's dominion over nature is not there" (Strathern 1980: 219). Strathern's writing highlights the necessity for dominion to be preceded by transcendence: in the West people acknowledge "on the one hand we are part of that system [nature], and on the other able to use its laws for our own purposes, which render them separable and ourselves transcendent" (1980: 196)[16].

The molimo is about restoring relationship, rather than about transcending and controlling the forest or other people. Sometimes it can be about control of the ancestors and the forest, and about establishing hierarchy and the denigration of women. However the molimo which involves these themes so prominently, and which we will be examining in the following chapter, is one which the local Mbuti chief, Yuma, is responsible for. Thus, while not denying that these themes of control and domination can be present, this tends to reflect the presence of abusive force whether in the form of a Bila chief or in the form of an Mbuti man like Yuma who was far more obsessed with the themes of witchcraft and possession than others were. Assertion of hierarchy among the Mbuti tends to be when individuals are themselves involved in seeking to assert their power because they are under threat: a situation which itself parallels that of the Bila under colonialism.

The view of a ritual such as the molimo as being essentially a technique to secure "the transcendent support of the forest" is thus to miss the nature of Mbuti relations with the forest, and the central point in Turnbull's work. Yet this assertion about the nature of ritual is at the heart of Bloch's argument (1989, 1992). Bloch describes the core of the ritual process as follows: the participants enter the ritual state and in so doing they leave behind their everyday understanding of the world. This is achieved through the conquest of the participant by a transcendent power. A stage which in turn is followed by the return of the participant to the everyday world, only now "[h]e is a changed person, a permanently transcendental person who can therefore dominate the here and now of which he was

16 Which recalls Bacon's statement that "nature is to be commanded only by obeying her" (1620: Book 1, para 129, cited in Brown 1990: 242).

previously a part" (1992: 5). In Bloch's view, the participants' "native vitality is replaced by a conquered, external, consumed vitality . . . and as superior beings they can reincorporate the present life through the idiom of conquest or consumption" (ibid.). Since Bloch views this as the "irreducible core of the ritual process" (1992: 1) it should apply to the molimo festival as much as to rituals like the nkumbi.

However, there is an internal contradiction within Bloch's universal scheme since he has elaborated it through using African hunter-gatherer material (e.g. Woodburn 1982) to demonstrate his distinction between everyday knowledge and ideological knowledge (e.g. Bloch 1989: 15-18). The former - everyday knowledge - being the understandings of the life process which humans share as a result of shared neurological factors and their practical interaction with the environment. The latter - ideological knowledge - tending to deny or warp everyday knowledge in order to legitimise the power of a transcendent entity, which is the means whereby the domination by those with power can be made legitimate in the social experience of the group and in the bodily experience of those undergoing ritual. In the societies of those hunter-gatherers whom he cites[17], he argues that there is "minimal ritual communication" (1989: 16) since there is hardly any hierarchy and therefore no need to use such rituals: rituals which only exist elsewhere to legitimise the structures of power.

The molimo, as a central and recurring ritual in Mbuti life, presents a major problem for Bloch's argument. Either the Mbuti are hierarchical and use the molimo to assert hierarchy - which undermines his attempt to assert a distinction between everyday and ideological knowledge by citing such hunter-gatherers as examples of societies where this process (of domination legitimised through ritual and ideology) is absent; or the Mbuti are not hierarchical - in which case the molimo is not about domination but about maintaining relationships with each other and the forest which are indeed 'everyday'. Thus the irreducible core of the ritual process need not be concerned with legitimising domination but with expressing and experiencing fundamental shared values. In the molimo these usually concern creating harmony within each singer, within the camp, and between the camp and the forest.

In fact the molimo can be made to *appear* to fit into Bloch's scheme very well, a scheme which clearly builds on Van Gennep's (1909) and Victor Turner's (1969) analysis of the tripartite structure of rites of passage. Bloch's scheme also supports Ortner's assertion that ritual is about culture controlling nature, about the "human ability to act upon and regulate, rather than passively move with and be moved by, the givens of natural existence" (Ortner

17 E.g.: Woodburn on the Hadza (1982),Turnbull on the Mbuti (1965), and Lee on the !Kung (1972).

1974: 72). In applying Bloch's analysis one could interpret the molimo festival as a process of domination in which the authority of the elders is embodied in the transcendent forest. The participants in the ritual are the young men who are conquered by the forest, who become it and enter the camp as the voice of the forest (and ancestors): whereupon they conquer the camp with song. In this view the molimo trumpet is a threatening conquering power since villagers, women and children retreat to their huts; and only those who have already been conquered by ideology, who have themselves been the voice of the molimo, can participate in the molimo singing. In Bloch's view such ritual singing is in a form which negates individuality and creativity: "[c]ommunication has stopped being a dialectic and has become a matter of repeating correctly" (1989: 38). Thus on one level the rebounding violence could be seen to occur when the young men, conquered by the molimo trumpet, themselves conquer the camp; but to the extent that the whole camp is participating in the ritual, the rebounding violence could be described as occurring the following day when the whole camp conquers and consumes animals through participating in the hunt.

I have outlined the way in which the molimo can neatly be made to fit into Bloch's scheme in order to demonstrate how easy it is to make ethnographic material fit ones own dominant cultural assumptions. However the assumption that domination is the key to understanding social relations, and relations between humans and other aspects of the environment, clearly mirrors Western assumptions, rather than accurately reflects Mbuti experience. For example, Bloch's approach assumes that the singing which is at the heart of the molimo ritual is mere repetition rather than a form of co-operative creativity between autonomous individuals which mirrors the hunt itself. As we saw in the molimo described earlier: the battling between the voice of the molimo and the voice of the hunters was one in which each side was encouraging the other to go deeper and deeper into the complexity of harmonies and refrains; the individual striving and empathic co-operation echoing the complex co-operation required in the hunt, and the far simpler experience of the children playing 'boules'. As we have seen, the Mbuti can act within a matrix of personal relationships of equality both with other people and with other aspects of the environment; and as we shall see in the following chapter they can act within the context of the dispossession of the self caused by powerful economic and political forces. Thus, however much one can make the molimo fit into Bloch's scheme, it is rather like the attempt to make hunter-gatherer interaction with their environment fit into the cost benefit analysis of economics. As I intend to demonstrate in the next section, it is possible to make our account of their reality fit into our schemes, but only at the expense of losing touch with the very different reality of their experience.

WORK: TECHNOLOGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND BELONGING

Work and socialising, and entertainment and political decision making, often co-exist within the same activity. For example, performances were often not simply entertainment but a way of dealing with difficult moods and arguments in camp. Peoples complaints would often start as a minor grumble by their fire and rise to a volume that included the whole camp. In these situations, or when collective decisions such as whether to move camp had to be made, a speech might be made from outside the entrance to a persons hut, or - if seeking to resolve an issue or sway the whole camp - then it might be made from the centre of the camp. However, just as such speeches were open to being supported or sabotaged by others humour, so performances such as Musimu's often made serious points about difficult behaviour. The dividing line between the work of politics and the leisure of entertainment was never clear. Similarly, the same individual may be engaged in 'leisure activity' (e.g. joking or storytelling), 'family life' (e.g. childcare), and 'work' (e.g. making an axe handle) at the same time. Work making string out of kusa vine with which to repair the nets, making or mending spears, weaving baskets and repairing nets, would take place in the evening (and in the morning too if the hunt set out late) during speeches, performances and socialising.

It is rare for anybody to make a basket, an axe handle, or anything else, by themselves; at some point somebody else will invariably reach over and continue to weave the basket for a while, or attempt to fit the axe head into the axe handle someone has made. The regularity with which this happens, and the fact that it is sometimes worked on for just a brief amount of time, suggests that this process is a way of ensuring that possessions are not entirely made or owned by one individual, but can be claimed or borrowed by others. While the work of producing tools is thus either symbolically or actually a shared process, it is also happening within a social context which is shared and within which it is impossible to distinguish leisure from work[18]. Stories of the hunt were re-told, arguments had, and people would often congregate around fires to smoke taba or bangui, and carry on talking, working, arguing, until - as darkness fell - the singing would often get underway. Singing which itself was an expression of the co-operation at the heart of the camp and the hunt:

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[18] "Serious issues are always involved in play; just as, in humans, play is inextricably involved in all 'serious' work. When through industrial or other means the play elements are taken out of work, work becomes drudgery and less efficient, not more; and when the seriousness is taken away from play, then playing grows sloppy and dull, not fun. (Schechner 1977 [1988]: 101, cited in Thin 1991: vii)

both between the individual members of the group and between these people and their forest and ancestors.

It is for this reason that the habitual Western approach to understanding hunter-gatherer economic activity is far more misleading than it is revealing. In a textbook on human impact on the environment Simmons writes (1990: 61, emphasis added): "The link between hunter-gatherer societies and nature is through *technology*; i.e. the *exploitation* of existing knowledge of materials, energy, etc., for *productive ends.*" There are a whole host of important Western assumptions within this one sentence. The separation of fact from value contained in the notion of 'technology' (which in the West is generally considered to consist of transferable rather than socially embedded tools); the separation of morality from economics within the notion of 'exploitation'; and of means from ends within the notion of 'productive ends'.

In essence: this way of looking at hunter-gatherers assumes the centrality of their transcendence of their environment. A separation which sees them as exploiting it, and which is very similar to the centrality of transcendence (and the conquering of the individual by ideology) which lies at the heart of Bloch's understanding of ritual. It is no coincidence that Bloch's analysis of the role of ritual in non-industrial societies - or of "education, mass media and the church" in industrial societies (Bloch 1989: 121) - as being "mechanisms" (1989: 121) whereby individuals learn to accept and experience the domination of those in power, mirrors so exactly the dominant Western assumption that the relationship between humans and the rest of the environment is also primarily one of separation, domination and production.

The debate concerning whether to apply a formalist economic (e.g. Riches 1982) or a substantivist cultural (e.g. Polyani 1968; Sahlins 1968, 1974) approach to the understanding of production has continued. Earlier arguments concerned the general applicability of Western economics, which is seen as the "study of the allocation of scarce resources among competing ends" (Riches 1982: 212). Today the debate is conducted so as to throw into relief the cultural and emotional landscape within which Western people meet their material needs (e.g. Lindstrom 1995 on Cargoism). At the same time writers such as Ingold (1992a, 1992b, 1994a, 1994b) and Bird-David (1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993) argue that hunter-gatherers relate to each other and to their environment in a way which implies a different kind of sociality. Formalist assumptions about the applicability of 'rational' economic activity to what we term 'Western economies' are being questioned as strongly as is the application of such concepts to hunter-gatherers. Before examining the

'culturalist reformulation' of Western economies, I shall outline Bird-David's and Ingold's understanding of hunter-gatherer economies, an understanding which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 13.

The whole issue of work is one which has preoccupied hunter-gatherer studies (e.g. Meillasoux 1973, Gardner 1991, Hawkes 1993, Bell 1995). It is intrinsically bound up with an attempt to understand how hunter-gatherers relate to their environment: do they pursue a cost benefit approach to work, seeking to maximise their productive capacity, and are only limited in this by their technology; or do they pursue an approach to work and their environment which is entirely different to our own? Bird-David has usefully distinguished between the two very different approaches to hunter-gatherer work and affluence that sit side by side in Sahlins (1968, 1974) writing on 'the original affluent society'. On the one hand there is an approach grounded in Western economics which attempts to measure affluence by referring to the number of hours spent hunting and to the amount of leisure time available. This is an approach which sees hunter-gatherers security as being predicated on their rational confidence in their ability to extract their material needs from their physical environment. On the other hand there is the attempt to move beyond the division of activities into work and leisure, and instead to see hunter-gatherers security as being predicated on their intimate trust in, knowledge of, and relationship with, their living environment. This is an approach which does not use *our* economic measurements to ascertain *their* affluence but sees their security as being grounded in their culturally different way of experiencing work and relationship[19]. As we have seen, such issues as work and affluence are in fact inextricably bound up with the relationship between the Mbuti and their environment, between the genders, and between individuals within the context of what we call ritual and what we call economically productive activity.

There is, for example, the centrality of the net hunt which is not seen simply as productive activity, but as a social occasion which people enter into as an end in itself. This is evident in the experience of the Mbuti, but also in the experience of the Aka net hunters studied by Hewlett and Bahuchet. An Mbuti hunter engaged in good humoured exchanges by the hunting fire, or singing to the forest as he moves from one cast of the nets to the next, re-establishes the peaceful state of mind and peaceful relationship with the forest sought in the

19 Reversing the traditional approach to economics, Professor Lane measures Western affluence according to relationship: "those with the most friends were the most satisfied with their lives" (1994: 25); and he argues that the "unprecedented rise in clinical depression in advanced and rapidly advancing economies" is due to prioritising the acquisition of commodities over the valuing of friendship (1994: 1). In a similar vein Trevarthen and Logethi state that their research into infant communication "reveals a driving primary need for the human person to attain a feeling of valid and effective motivation in relation to others." (1989: 181).

molimo. In writing of the Aka, the manifestations of this attitude are described as the "gestures and practices . . .[which] allow the loosening of psychological tensions considered as sources of failure . . . For the Aka, being lucky at hunting is above all a question of peace of mind" (Motte-Florac, Bahuchet & Thomas 1993: 551). Peace of mind and a peaceful relationship with the forest are seen as necessary for the success of the hunt, but they also create the conditions in which people interact with each other and the forest in ways which increase good humour and enjoyment. Barry Hewlett, also writing about the Aka, describes how on the way to the net hunt "everyone seemed to be happier and more relaxed the further one walked into the forest" (1991: 40).

Thus the hunt is not seen as 'work' in the Western sense of the term. It is not (contra Sahlins 1968, 1974) seen as simply a means to an end, as necessary subsistence activity which has to be got through in order to be rewarded with a satisfactory livelihood and sufficient leisure time in the evening. As John Hart says: "all members of the community may participate in it. Even children can perform important functions . . . The overall pace of the hunt is so leisurely that old people and mothers with infants may join. . . . In effect, the net hunt is as much a social event as it is the means of subsistence." (1978: 337). Sharing rather than division is at the heart of this experience. Applying Western economic and environmental concepts such as the division between work and leisure, or between a passive environment and an active human social world, does not make sense of this context[20].

The hunt is *leisurely*; subsistence activity is a *social* event; success depends on a *peaceful* state of mind and a peaceful relationship with the forest/ancestors; but success is measured as much by the enjoyment of the process as it is by the number of antelope killed. There may be more social benefit derived from a well told story in the evening about an animal which was cunning enough to escape, than there would have been from the calories made available to the whole group if that same animal had been caught. The active enjoyment of the process - the degree to which people throw themselves into the molimo, the story telling, the hunt - enables co-operation and hence success. Basic nutritional subsistence is assured within the group through demand-sharing, and for the group as a whole through an ability to move hunting area, and through exchange with the villagers. Yet this subsistence relies almost entirely on an ability to co-operate on the hunt which derives from being able to be at peace with the forest, oneself and others; a peacefulness which the molimo and the social nature of the hunt facilitates. The experience of sharing with the

[20] Perhaps Sahlins is not the substantivist he claims to be, but a formalist in disguise. However, it is hard to tell whether the disguise is that of an American Plymouth car salesman or that of a Zen monk

forest and each other, which is central both to the hunt and to the molimo, is both the primary reward of engaging in either (*contra* Hawkes 1993) and the prerequisite for effective co-operation.

Woodburn has described the economies of hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti as 'immediate return systems': "economies in which people usually obtain an immediate yield for their labour, use this yield with minimal delay and place minimal emphasis on property rights" (Barnard & Woodburn 1988: 11). What should also be stressed is that the immediacy of the economic yield for their labour is simply one consequence of an even more immediate cultural 'return' which is gained through the *experience* of sharing with others and with the forest itself. As we have seen, the way people share through co-operating in the hunt, the molimo, and in making tools (and the way people share the use of these tools and the success of the hunt) means that social life and productive activity, singing to the forest and extracting resources from it, ritual and everyday understanding, are not set in opposition to one another. Clearly the relationship the Mbuti have with the forest mirrors their relationship with work and with each other, in the sense that co-operation and sharing are at the heart of their social and economic experience.

ECONOMICS, RATIONAL MAN AND THE NOBLE SAVAGE

The dominant Western understanding of the relationship within and between species (including humans), mirrors Western understandings of the nature of work and economics; an understanding which we tend to assume to be true for all societies and not only our own. Thus Western descriptions of the processes at work in the 'natural world' and the description of the 'harsh economic realities of life' use the same language; and are as mutually reinforcing as are Mbuti relations with each other and their environment. Gould notes that Darwin derived the idea of natural selection partly by "wondering how he might transfer the laissez-faire principles of Adam Smith's economics to nature" (cited in Lohmann 1993: 203). The struggle to survive, both in the market place and in evolution, are described in terms of the underlying reality of competition, of the survival of the fittest, of the hidden hand of market forces or of natural selection. In this understanding the language of Western technology and Western 'rationality' is still the dominant mode of analysis for interpreting the way other people relate to their environment. There is the assumption that technology is a universal quantifiable adaptive ability (with the implication that we in the West are developing our 'market niche' at such a pace relative to other cultures because we are the 'fittest'), and there is the assumption that technology is as separable from social relations as work is from leisure. Roy Ellen, for example, writes that:

> Every human population employs techniques in order to appropriate resources from the environment. Each technique is a combination of material artefacts (tools and machines) and the knowledge required to make and use them. . . . such techniques . . . together constitute a mode of subsistence or - emphasising it's adaptive and coping aspects - a subsistence strategy. The concept operates at the level of technical relations of production (*contra* Ingold 1980: 8). It indicates little about the *social* relations of production, . . . (Ellen 1982: 128)[21].

The evident assumption that such a description is somehow neutral, value free and universally applicable, is surprising. Ingold writes that "when we speak of production . . . humanity's transcendence of the natural world is already presupposed" (1994b: 4). Raymond Williams points out that "to speak of man 'intervening' in natural processes is to suppose that he might find it possible not to do so . . . Nature has to be thought of . . . as separate from man before any question of intervention or command, and the methods and ethics of either, can arise." (1972: 154; cited in Ingold 1994b: 4). The construction - as if universal - of this specific cultural understanding of human-environmental relationships will be explored in Chapter 13; for now I will explore this construction in relation to Western understandings of economic activity.

Bird-David (1992b) addressed Sahlins argument about hunter-gatherers being 'the original affluent society', by replacing his sketchy and abstract description of their "Zen strategy" (1968: 85) with a culturally specific description of their affluence as being an aspect of their trust in a giving environment. Whilst she thereby developed Sahlins' argument that such hunter-gatherers approach economics in a way which is totally different to Western market economies, she also rejected his attempt to quantify affluence by measuring leisure time against time spent on the food quest.

However the impact of Sahlins' argument derived only in part from his turning on its head common understandings of the economic life of hunter-gatherers. The impact derived just as much from his description of life in Western market economies. Where Sahlins saw hunter-gatherers material needs as few and finite and easily satisfied, he described market economies as obsessed with scarcity. Here "every acquisition is simultaneously a deprivation" (1968: 86), wants are infinite and means are limited, although improvable through technology. This aspect of Sahlins argument, the cultural context of Western economies, has been developed through the writing of people such as MacFarlane (1987), Carrier (1992) and Lindstrom (1995). It is ironic that Bird-David - in searching for a metaphor with which to convey her understanding of hunter-gatherers 'cosmic economy of

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21 ". . . the inception of cultivation entails new *social* relations of production, which establish control by solidary groups over the fields they have laboured to prepare . . ." (Ingold 1980: 86)

sharing' - used the image of a bank (1992: 32-34), since the attempt at a cultural reformulation of Western discourse about economics, places the language of people such as Ellen (quoted above) and our whole understanding of Western economies within a cultural framework.

Within this cultural framework the supposedly neutral language of Riches formalist definition of economics is seen as emerging from, and being embedded in, a world view which is as peculiar and powerful as that of the singing of an Mbuti hunter establishing a peaceful state of mind in himself and between himself and the forest/ancestors as he sets out on the hunt. Riches supposedly universal definition of economics as the "study of the allocation of *scarce resources* among *competing ends*" (1982: 212, emphasis added) is, in effect, rephrased by Lindstrom in his study of Cargoist discourse as being the insistence "that a human desire that is *never satisfied* and *never-ending* is the normal, truthful experience of humankind everywhere" (Lindstrom 1995: 56, emphasis added). Western market economies obsession with scarcity, with the 'fact' that "one never has enough to buy everything" (Sahlins 1968: 86), is expressed in the way Western authors relate these Cargo stories. Lindstrom explores a theme similar to that explored by Alan MacFarlane in his historical study of the rise of capitalism which argues that capitalism could not have arisen without the existence of the romantic love complex (1987: 140). Lindstrom describes how:

> Both cargo and love stories together are reflexes of a powerful underlying master discourse about desire. . . .They tell of an essential human condition that fixates us on constantly frustrated desire - infinite desire that serves both psychological and market economies. We can never get enough. Love of commodities must remain unrequited. If we could possess everything we desire, just as if we could find true love, our psychological economy would grind to a halt. (1995: 56)

Thus descriptions of other peoples activity in language such as that of Riches or Ellen above, masks the culturally embedded nature of Western economic and environmental discourse behind a claim for the universal applicability of such language. Lindstrom argues that anthropologists understanding of cargo cults have been informed by a need to argue that all humans share in this 'master discourse' of supposedly rational economic activity which is in fact an endless desire for more, a learnt desire which is central to Western psychology and economy. Bird-David and Ingold argue that this is not the master discourse among people such as the Mbuti, that the master discourse among such hunter-gatherers is one of active trust and sharing[22]. The response to such arguments (that not all

22 It is important to note that among the Mbuti the desire to have more of whatever somebody else (such as myself) possessed in excess, acts as a way of circulating excess rather than as a way of accumulating it. See the section on demand-sharing in Chapter 5.

people place such central importance on the desire to have more) can be quite ferocious. I shall examine two such responses: Ellen himself, and Kent Redford.

The argument against the notion that there are any people who may not have as their central discourse the accumulation of material wealth, is normally expressed in language which demonstrates that 'they' (whoever 'they' are) are just like 'us' (assuming that 'we' are people who are primarily motivated in our actions by economic gain). We saw this in Linden's (1992) description of the Aka offering to build a road for money. It is also evident in Ellen's writing about the Nuaula of Seram, when he states that:

> It is palpable that if there is sufficient pecuniary motive, land and resources can be disposed of despite the existence of *sasi*, displeasure on the part of the 'Lord of the land', or the ancestors (1993: 140).

Yet from his own account, it does not appear that 'pecuniary motive' is the only, or indeed the most important, factor in such a decision. He himself argues that such decisions are made in a context of massive in-migration promoted by the Indonesian government, which he describes as a "tragedy of invasion"; and he further argues that the implications of selling their land are not clear to the Nuaulu since for them "it is barely conceivable that sago, pigs, timber and rainforest could become limited goods on Seram"(1993: 141).

Where Bird-David and Ingold argue that some hunter-gatherers experience a qualitatively different relationship with their environment to that evident in the West, writers such as Ellen and Redford are at pains to refute the implications of such arguments. Ellen argues that:

> Part of the mythology of late-twentieth-century environmentalism is that certain 'traditional' peoples are uniquely adapted in ways which ensure that their material and spiritual resources are held in balance. Such people are usually assumed to be in some vague sense - although by no means exclusively - gatherers and hunters, practitioners of animistic 'natural' religions, remote and resistant to change. This is recognisably only the latest of a long and ignoble pedigree of views which perpetuate a pernicious dichotomy, which, however much some have tried to disguise it, unmistakably reproduces the notion of a primitive, exotic other (1993: 126).

Many would argue, however, that 'the other' is precisely what anthropology concerns itself with. Augé, for example, argues that "[t]he question of the other is not just a theme that anthropology encounters from time to time; it is its sole intellectual object" (1995: 18). This 'othering' then is part of the process of differentiating: of understanding the nature of the interrelationship between different parts through understanding how difference is constructed. The study of 'pernicious dichotomies' both in other cultures and in our own, is the very essence of the anthropological enterprise. When it is done unthinkingly, as if the statements about others related only to facts about 'them' and not also to reflections of

ourselves, then it is indeed pernicious; and no more so than when somebody thinks they have managed to escape these cultural constructs of othering and are scientifically describing people as if at heart they behave in the same 'rational' way as Western 'economic man'.

However Ellen usefully highlights the current preoccupation with questions of whether a relationship of 'balance' between people and their environment is possible. This preoccupation, often manifesting as an interest in 'traditional people', reflects a desire in the West which runs counter to the dominant inclination to render other peoples realities in terms of our cultures learned motivation; even if it often simply speaks of 'them' as an inversion of 'us'. By contrast, the question that I have been seeking to explore in this thesis concerns not only cultural differences in terms of how people such as the Mbuti relate to each other and their environment, but also historical similarities in peoples experience in terms of the forces which lead people to become alienated from their land: whether this be through colonialism, logging, conservation or the Indonesian trans-migration programme.

Kent Redford in an article titled 'The ecologically Noble Savage' is equally scathing about the notion that people can live in harmony with their environment. He:

> refutes this concept of ecological nobility . . . Most tropical forests have been severely altered by human activities before European contact. . . .These people behaved as humans do now: they did whatever they had to to feed themselves and their families. They have the same capacities, *desires*, and, perhaps, *needs to overexploit their environment* as did our European ancestors (1991: 46, emphasis added).

That people in many cultures can overexploit their environment is beyond doubt. For example, Bloch describes Zafimaniry delight in cutting down their forest (1994)[23]. To suggest that such activity expresses a universal 'desire' or 'need' is to fall into the same trap as those writers on Cargo cults described by Lindstrom.

A different perspective - which is similar to Augé's - argues that the existence of the 'Noble Savage' is located not in environmentalism but in the nature of anthropology itself. Alan Barnard argues that:

> In anthropological theories which differentiate 'primitive' from 'non-primitive' societies (such as evolutionist ones), the Noble Savage survives as the representation of virtue in the exotic. In anthropological theories which do not make this distinction (such as relativistic ones), he survives as a reflection of the common humanity at the root of all cultures (1994: 251; see also Barnard 1989, 1995).

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23 Although even here it is not any *'need* to overexploit their environment' that drives the Zafimaniry to do this but a culturally specific belief concerning the need to leave their mark - literally - on the landscape.

If the 'Noble Savage' survives in anthropological theories "as a reflection of the *common humanity* at the root of all cultures"; the 'Possessing Westerner' also survives as a reflection of the *common alienation* possible for people from any culture. Both ideal types can serve a useful purpose if they enable us to gain a fresh perspective on our engrained assumptions about the nature of desire and the inevitability of being enmeshed in a market economy and in systems of abusive power relations. I have sought to argue that the Mbuti are often accurately portrayed, by authors such as Turnbull, Bird-David and Ingold, in terms which Western people would often be prone to interpret as descriptions of the Noble Savage. In Chapter 13 I will be examining why it makes sense to see this "as a reflection of the common humanity" in the experience of people in all cultures, including the West. However in the following chapter I wish to explore a different aspect of our common humanity as it manifests within Mbuti relations. Namely the way in which they, like anybody else, can be "drawn into larger systems to suffer its impact and become its agents" (Wolf 1982: 23); the way they too can attempt to claim transcendence and domination of both the human and forest environment.

CHAPTER 8 MBUTI - BILA SHARED COSMOLOGY: The Forest/Ancestor Complex

This chapter integrates Mbuti experience of the negative aspects of the forest into Bird-David's "cosmic economy of sharing" between humans and nature, through exploring beliefs concerning food offerings, the ancestors, and finally a molimo in which the attempt to dominate, rather than the attempt to restore right relationship, predominates. For the Mbuti the forest is not experienced as separate from human interaction with it; and for both the Bila and the Mbuti there is a continuum, rather than an opposition, between the living and the ancestors, and the ancestors and the forest.

ANCESTORS AND THE FOREST

Integrating the negative aspects of nature, and the living nature of ancestors

In considering the environment as a living rather than an inert entity, Ichikawa makes the important point that Bird-David's portrayal of a hunter gatherer 'cosmic system of sharing' with their environment fails to include Mbuti experience of the negative aspects of 'nature':

> Nature has important negative aspects. . . . [W]hile the forest may sometimes be called "father" or "mother" and described as a "womb", it is also conceived to be a place where dead ancestors roam. Mbuti regard the forest with ambivalence; it is the place one comes from and the place one goes to after death. Therefore, when they address the forest as "father", they are appealing to it for the benevolence generally expected from a parent rather than simply reiterating their relationship with it. . . . Mbuti ambivalence toward the forest gives us a richer image of nature than simply regarding it as a source of goodness only. The problem is how to incorporate the negative aspects of nature into the idea of a cosmic system of sharing between humans and nature. (Ichikawa 1992: 41)

This passage comprehensively highlights the broad range of Mbuti experience of the forest[24]. However, rather than recognise the importance of the 'ancestors as forest', Ichikawa instead leaves them to occupy simply a negative intrusive role. This results in his being unable to "incorporate the negative aspects of nature" into the broader sweep of Mbuti beliefs. However the point is that when they address the forest as "father" they are not only addressing the forest, they are also addressing the ancestors, and in all probability the ancestor they are addressing is their actual *épa* (father) or *tata* (grandfather) who is dead. This is certainly the case for many Bila, as well as for the Mbuti who address the forest and the ancestors in the same breath because they are, for them, the same being.

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24 Wæhle notes the prevalence of threatening forest spirits among the Efe (e.g. 1989: 23)

In a similar vein, Kopytoff argues that in the West we tend to make an absolute distinction between the living and the dead, and assume that an ancestor will be treated in a qualitatively different way to a living elder. "The term 'ancestor' sets up a dichotomy where there is a continuum. By conceptually separating living elders from ancestors, we unconsciously introduce Western connotations to the phenomena" (1971: 140). For the Suku of south-western Zaire, for example, ancestors are simply elders who are no longer alive but are still present, and are treated similarly to elders: "The attitude to elders (dead or alive) is normally ambivalent; they both punish and exercise benevolence . . ." (Kopytoff 1971: 138)[25].

The Mbuti experience ambivalence in their relationship with the forest, but they generally work within the molimo to make the relationship good, and thereby to restore harmony among themselves, and enable the hunt to be successful. For the Mbuti, restoring harmony in their relationship with the forest inevitably means restoring harmony among themselves: for the forest is inhabited by the living and the dead, it is alive with those who are living and those who are now both ancestor and forest. Thus, following Kopytoff: the qualitative distinction and opposition we in the West habitually make between the living elders and the ancestors does not hold for the Bila and the Mbuti any more than it does for the Suku[26]. But, moving beyond Kopytoff's position, the division we habitually make between people (whether ancestors or living) and their environment (in this case the forest), does not hold for the Mbuti, and to a certain extent it does not hold for the Bila either.

Thus, when I use the term 'ancestor' I am identifying it with this wider context of meanings; rather than within the narrower meaning which elevates the 'ancestors' to a place that is outside and opposed to 'nature' and the living human community. In fact, the

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25 The drawback in Kopytoff's analysis is that he appears to endorse a static view of social relations, one which he was to move on from in *The African Frontier* (1987). However, McFall usefully points out that this static "structural-functional model of social stasis and the historical model of social dynamics are [both] reflections of indigenous modes of knowledge" (1995: 265). He argues that "ancestor-related practices are techniques for engaging with the socially constituted past" allowing people to make and remake their social world (1995: 258). McFall's approach shows respect for *our* anthropological ancestors by not discarding the importance of legitimacy based in the continually reconstituted lineage. It also acknowledges the complexity and flexibility of changing relations, as evident in Grinkers emphasis on the house rather than the lineage (1994), and in Carsten' and Hugh-Jones' comment (following Strathern 1973: 95, Kuper 1982: 88) that "kinship is created not only out of descent but also out of ties to land and locality"(1995: 16). "Depending on the relative weighting given to filiation and alliance, and to wealth, inheritance and status, houses can span a continuum from the more lineage-like to the entirely cognatic" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 18).

26 Although conceptually people in the West make an unbridgeable division between the living and the dead, in practice this division dissolves when considering individuals who are identified as being members of ones 'lineage', thus dead but relevant anthropologists are very much alive in current debates. They are referred to in the present tense, and their presence may be far more vital than that of physically living anthropologists.

ancestors can be elevated to such a position when an individual is also trying to elevate themselves to a similar position of power; but the task of turning such a continuum into an opposition is difficult, except for so long as an external force is tipping the balance in favour of elevation and domination. My contention is that the full range of negative and positive Mbuti beliefs about the forest, and the full range of their extractive and respectful relations with it and with the Bila, make sense when understood within the context of the forest/ancestor complex.

"The Ancestors and the Forest are Inseparable"

For the Mbuti and the Bila the aliveness of their environment is experienced and expressed through their interaction with it, and through the awareness of their ancestors inhabiting the forest both in the past and in the present, a form of inhabiting in which they and the forest become indistinguishable. In a key passage describing Mbuti religion, Turnbull himself hints at this interpretation when he describes *kéti* as "spirits, human and animal, who are not necessarily the spirits of the dead but may be independent manifestations of the forest, and who are disembodied only in that they are invisible to the Mbuti" (1965: 249). The ambiguity in this passage - about who the bakéti are - mirrors Ichikawa's insistence on broadening our understanding of Mbuti experience. The implications of Turnbull's ambiguity here is in strong contrast to the sharp and explicit distinction he customarily makes between village ancestor worship and Mbuti forest worship. In this passage the spirits of the forest are both human and animal, both spirits of the dead and independent manifestations of the forest, both invisible and embodied.

It is because of this that the Mbuti invoke their ancestral and forest spirits by making offerings of food to ancestors who both inhabit and are the forest. These spirits - simultaneously ancestors and forest, invisible and embodied - are often invoked daily by the Mbuti to aid the hunt when they offer food (preferably liver) to the spirits at a tiny wooden house, an endekélélé, just outside camp. The Bila likewise make offerings of produce from their field at endekélélé in their cemeteries just outside the village, asking for help with the harvest, or with the clearing of a new field.

The Mbuti also listen to the spirits, normally in the form of their own ancestors, who come to them in dreams telling them such things as where to hunt, or telling someone that they mustn't hunt today but must stay in camp. Ancestors also arrive in a far more disruptive role when they enter one of their living relatives in a form of spirit possession, often angry because their relative has not behaved properly. This happened both to Bila and Mbuti young women. In both cases the molimo trumpet, representing the forest/ancestors,

entered the camp to deal with the angry ancestor in the individual. And in both cases male and female Mbuti elders, dialoguing with the molimo, linked the need to restore harmony to the individual with the need for the molimo to bless and restore good fortune to the hunt: the molimo being referred to both as the spirit or animal of the forest, and as a powerful ancestor. One Mbuti elder explained it like this:

Kétyo batata abaano-ba suba ndula
Kéti na ndula béko-o kadi, kabakatani, kadi tu
The spirits of the ancestors are in the forest.
Spirit and forest are one, inseparable, one always.

For Mbuti and Bila in the hunting camps near Utama, it is bodily experience of interaction with the forest which gives rise to the sense of the forest as alive. These bodily memories of past interactions are stored in the body in the form of song, of laughter, of wounds, and stored in the 'body' of the forest in terms of places where things have happened to ancestors, and where ancestors have happened to living people. For example Bisaili, arriving at a certain point on a path through the forest, began describing what had happened to his cousin Banyé:

> This is where Banyé was badly wounded by the charging buffalo, his machette knocked from his hand. He fought all morning with the buffalo, until he was so weak he wanted to give up. The ancestors showed him in a waking dream where the machette was, so he lived.

This is just one example of a place 'where ancestors have happened to living people'. This would appear to be congruent with Connerton's statement that "we will experience our presents differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect the present" (1992: 2). However it differs from his axiom that we experience our present world "with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present" (1992: 2), because for both Bila and Mbuti there is not the sense of the past as having gone away and remaining only in memory, the past is present as for example in the living presence of ancestors. One could of course question Western notions of the past persisting only within that peculiar cognitive domain called memory, and Connerton does this very usefully by demonstrating the "backgrounding of bodily practices" (1992: 101) and by suggesting "that memory, or tradition, gets passed on in non-textual and non-cognitive ways" (1992: 102-103). However his work does not question the fundamental premise of Western understandings of memory which is a particular conception of linear time, evident in the writing on ancestors which Kopytoff has questioned[27].

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[27] Interestingly *huma* is the Kimbuti word for both tomorrow and yesterday. Likewise, *buhumali* means both the day after tomorrow and the day before yesterday.

Such places as the one where Banyé was badly wounded might be avoided, not out of a practical sense that this is where a buffalo lives (for buffalo's are everywhere) but because the place is alive with both the event that has happened and the ancestors who happened to Banyé within that event. In this case the place was specifically visited rather than avoided, since Banyé's courage and the precipitate arrival of the ancestors were living evidence - for Bisaili - of being at home in the forest.

In a similar vein, the Bila elder Phelix described how the ancestors enabled him to be at home in the forest as he and his Mbuti partner Kanjalai set up a fishing camp. He says that the spirits of the Bila ancestors, the Mbuti ancestors, and the forest itself are together as one: "The spirits are together: they [the Bila ancestors] walk with their Mbuti". Phelix addressed the 'ancestors' by calling out

> I am here father, I have arrived here, we walk with my child [Kanjalai] who you left with me. Our bodies are well. We've come to search for things. We present ourselves to you: do not forget us, we are your children.

The passage can be read in several different ways. Phelix is reasserting the close bonds between himself and the Mbuti (in this case his Mbuti partner's father was Phelix's fathers partner), while restating his attitude of ownership towards him. Contrary to Turnbull's assertion that for the Bila "all the spirits of the forest are malevolent and dangerous" (1965: 251), the passage is an expression both of Phelix's lack of fear of the forest, and also his belief in the power of the spirits and the need to be protected by them. It could be countered that Phelix is not calling on the spirits of the forest but on his ancestors spirits, however the point is that for the Mbuti these are fundamentally the same thing, and for the Bila the distinction between the two is at the very least ambiguous. This is evident in, for example, the villagers involvement in attempting to cure the Bila girl through the intervention of the molimo trumpet, an intervention which they recognise involves forest spirits as much as ancestral ones. Similarly Phelix' emphasis on the ancestors, which may appear to be a particularly village trait, is in fact repeated by Kenge below, when he explains the importance of making food offerings to the ancestors in the context of the molimo.

The Implications of Mbuti Food Offerings to the Ancestors and the Forest

Turnbull's discounting of Schebesta's view - that the Mbuti make food offerings to the forest in order to ensure a successful hunt - is simply one of the many crucial steps he takes in arguing that the way the Mbuti relate to the forest is entirely different to the way the villagers relate to the ancestors. Turnbull argues that where the villagers are involved in making offerings to secure the blessings of the ancestors, the Mbuti already possess an absolutely harmonious and secure relationship with their forest which is both mother and

father to them. After implying that any other view of their relationship with the forest is the result of the Mbuti deliberately misleading outsiders - primarily villagers, but also anthropologists - the following passage goes on to sum up Turnbull's insistence that the Mbuti only relate to their sacred forest in a sensible and respectful way:

> Whereas I was never able to secure confirmation of Schebesta's description of food offerings being made to the forest, except through village informants, there is very definitely a strongly felt and stated urge to use every part of the animal, and never to kill more than is necessary for the band's needs for the day (Turnbull 1965: 161).

The first half of this sentence not only effectively denies Schebesta's findings, but also implies that Schebesta (1933, 1936) was misled because he was listening to villagers views of Mbuti reality. This is one of the central rhetorical devices in Turnbull's writing. Any alternative interpretation - whether offered by anthropologists, villagers, or (most importantly) Mbuti themselves - is described as being simply a part of the mask the Mbuti adopt to deceive outsiders and so protect their sacred and harmonious forest world. By stating that the Mbuti do not make food offerings to the forest - but that the villagers believe they do - Turnbull is (mistakenly) arguing that the Mbuti do not engage in ritual pleading or coercion to increase the amount of animals they kill, and that only coercive villagers and gullible anthropologists would believe that they do.

This argument has had important consequences both within hunter-gatherer studies, and as a way of marking off hunter gatherer studies as a totally distinct area within anthropology. Writers such as Ingold follow Turnbull in proposing that the Mbuti only relate to their environment in a trusting way, one in which "[c]oersion, the attempt to extract by force, represents a betrayal of the trust that underwrites the [forests] willingness to give" (1992a: 42). Turnbull consistently downplays any suggestion that the Mbuti might relate to the forest in an extractive way: for instance through using food offerings or other ritual techniques to increase extraction. However, there is a strong contrast between his dismissing Schebesta's claim that the Mbuti make food offerings to the forest, and my observation of the importance of Mbuti food offerings to the forest/ancestors to aid the hunt: as was evident when Kenge said to me: "We take the liver of the animals, and give them to the ancestors so that they will make the forest fertile".

Thus, although Turnbull's work is superb at describing one very important aspect of Mbuti-Bila and Mbuti-Forest relations, in place of his black and white picture of these relations the reality is far more varied. There are many factors - such as the diversity of gender and inter-ethnic relations, the presence of hierarchy and its subversion, witchcraft accusations and beatings, the relish with which animals are killed by both Mbuti and Bila

alongside their respect for a forest inhabited by ancestors - which are present both in Mbuti camps and in Bila villages.

Throughout *Wayward Servants,* Turnbull describes Mbuti attitudes to the forest, each other or the Bila, which differ markedly from the ones he describes as representing their true beliefs and attitudes. However when Mbuti accuse each other of sorcery, establish mutually respectful relationships with villagers, or act towards the forest in a way which implies fear or disrespect, Turnbull always insists that they are either playacting in order to deceive outsiders and amuse themselves at the expense of outsiders, or that these are instances of particular individuals acting contrary to commonly held Mbuti values. His rich ethnography bears witness to the fact that the situation is far richer and more complex than that. Different people, or the same person in a different context at a different moment, have very different ways of relating to the forest and their neighbours, and these different approaches can be seen to be centrally related through the forest/ancestor complex. For example, in place of Turnbull's insistence that all the Mbuti approach the nkumbi in one way, and all the Bila approach it in another, it is clear that there are a range of meanings and interpretations which Bila and Mbuti impose on, or experience in, the circumcision rituals. There are very different currents of meaning within each group and within individuals, and not simply differences between two groups who have opposing experiences. However, before moving on to look at the nkumbi, I would like to first take a closer look at Mbuti beliefs concerning the ancestors and the molimo.

THE ANCESTORS IN THE MOLIMO

Kengé: the Ancestors and the Molimo

Kengé, Turnbull's most important informant told me a very different side to the molimo festival to that presented in Turnbull's writing. In the explanation below, he points to the importance of food offerings and the ancestors in describing how the Mbuti might come to hold a molimo, and what their first steps might be. Kengé explained what brings them to hold a molimo after a death:

> "The ancestors tell us in our dream to take out the molimo to do the work of the molimo. It is because of the dream of our ancestors (*baépa*) that we take out the molimo . . . Firstly it is necessary to [leave the old camp] . . . To create a new camp we must clear the ground and place food offerings on leaves on the ground, then we begin to invoke the grandparents of our grandparents. We take the liver of the animals, and give them to the ancestors so that they will make the forest fertile[28]. Which is to say that: the forest and the ancestors are the same. They are one.

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28 Fertile -*wédémisa* - here means 'cause the forest to be full of meat'.

Here Kengé effectively resolves the opposition Turnbull makes between the cultivators' ancestor worship and the hunter-gatherers' worship of the forest, when he says that: "The forest and the ancestors are the same". The forest is not sacred in itself: the interactions of past generations with the forest render it sacred.

In emphasising that the molimo comes about through the agency of the ancestors, and that the hunt succeeds through invoking the ancestors by making food offerings, Kengé brings together the molimo and the ancestors, the success of the hunt and food offerings, into a single complex whole in which the polarities are not ones of opposition but of interdependence. I should re-emphasise that the beliefs of individual Mbuti or Bila can vary widely from focusing on the threatening nature of other living people, the forest and the ancestors, to focusing on the benevolent nature of the ancestors, the forest and other living people; from using ritual techniques to secure specific external ends, to engaging in ritual as if as an end in itself. Thus there are very different perspectives, but Kengé eloquently sums up the interdependence of the different strands of belief.

However, in most situations most Bila and Mbuti tend to focus on one area of this spectrum, rather than on the whole picture, as is evident in differences in belief and in conflicts in practice. In the passage quoted he himself is focusing on the notion that the Mbuti all decide to hold a molimo, when in fact there may well be disagreement[29]. Similarly, Turnbull focuses not on the need for the Mbuti to invoke the ancestors, but only on the overriding necessity for them to rejoice and obey only the forest itself. He writes:

> But if a question or dispute arises then judgement is given only in terms of what is right for the band, or camp, as a whole. Ultimately that means what is right for the forest, the ultimate arbiter. (1983: 50)

I would like to turn to just such an occasion: to question whether there is always such a thing as the single voice of the forest that acts as the final arbiter. While there are always conflicting voices, needs and interpretations present in any such occasion, they are

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29 A few years earlier when Turnbull had written from America to ask Kenge to hold a molimo for his partner, Joseph Towles, who had just died: Kenge sent a letter back with me demanding many dollars to make it happen. In one sense this was extractive opportunism, and in another it was simply realistic in that endless nights of singing is hard and hungry work, and there was no immediate reason for the band to hold a molimo for someone who had long since disappeared. Interestingly, in the recent preface to the latest edition of *The Forest People* Turnbull quotes the part of Kenge's letter that refers affectionately to Joseph Towles and omits the lengthy demand for dollars. Likewise he quotes from an accompanying letter of mine which sought to cushion the impact of Kenge's demand for dollars on his very real grief, by emphasising the most compassionate end of the spectrum of Kenge's expressed feelings. Although quoting the letter, he omits to say that it is from a Westerner - which might imply that their forest world and beliefs are not so distant and different to our own. This rather personal digression usefully points out the ways in which Turnbull selects and omits in a way which constructs his picture of the Mbuti in opposition to the Bila and to the West, and which in the process fails to acknowledge the full range of their beliefs and the full range of our own beliefs.

normally resolved through the molimo in such a way that harmony is restored to relationships in camp, and to relationships between the camp and the forest/ancestors. The example below, however, illustrates that this need not be the outcome if an individual is attempting to use the molimo instrumentally in order to secure power for themselves at the expense of others. As such it points to the potential for the molimo to be used extractively rather than inclusively.

In this molimo festival ancestors are invoked from the past who are powerful in the present, and threats are directed at absent people in order to affect those present in the camp. Interwoven throughout the molimo festival is this semi-permeable sense of time, which the use of the ethnographic present aptly reflects.

The molimo trumpet: the single voice of the forest?

There are diverse reasons for bringing the sacred molimo trumpet into the hunting camp on this particular night. The most important shared concerns are that the hunt has been going badly, and that a young woman, Ndengi, has been causing havoc in the camp for days. People believe her to be possessed by the spirit of her dead father, Akumaké, who is angry with her. Alongside the explicit attempt to deal with spirit possession, and the shared desire to improve the hunt, there is the attempt by the Mbuti chief, Yuma, to reinforce his hierarchical view of the world by making loud accusations of sorcery.

Case Study: Ndengi's possession, Yuma's power play, and a plastic molimo

For the two days leading up to this molimo Bon Anné has had to stay in camp to restrain his young second wife, Ndengi, who has been possessed by the spirit of her dead father Akumaké. She suddenly leaps up and attacks the huts, exhibiting a fairly unrestrainable ferocity that seems out of all proportion to her physical strength. Although she seems totally possessed, she only attacks the huts of close relatives or friends. At other times she runs blindly into the forest and Bon Anné leaps after her to try and drag her back into camp. Finally, one evening just after dusk, with everyone in miserable and hungry spirits because of the poor hunting, the molimo is heard at the edge of the camp. Three of the younger hunters are heard shouting, as if at a dog, to make the molimo arrive in camp. They are in fact carrying the molimo trumpet into camp themselves, and the women and children hurry into the huts so that they are safe from the nyama n'endula.

Nahto, Bon Anné's mother, shouts at the molimo: "The teeth of your ancestors are red Potolo, why do you come here?" The name she uses for the molimo is that of a powerful

ancestor, Potolo, yet at the same time she insults his ancestors: effectively calling them monkeys by saying they have red teeth. She repeats her insult: "the teeth of your [mother] are red Potolo", adding "Akumaké has made Potolo arrive here." One of the men carrying the molimo, who was earlier shouting at it as if at a dog, cries "Ahaki" which is the word for a person carrying a lot of baggage: signifying that the molimo is weighed down with much power, it is carrying the whole forest into camp.

Yuma cries that they have prepared some meat to offer to the spirit so "the spirit must leave her, because the offering is ready. Father [Akumaké] leave Ndengi alone". The molimo growls threateningly, as if scraping with claws. One of the men carrying the molimo addresses it as grandfather, and another calls out to the spirit that if he doesn't leave Ndengi, the animal (the molimo) will attack them. Yuma gleefully says that now they'll have good hunting.

Bonne Anné asks the spirit in his wife if it wants some cannabis and Yuma says that yes Akumake does. Both Yuma and his wife comment on how exhausted Ndengi is. Nahto says that "It was Esidi who brought this thing [sorcery] into the Babukusi here". When Yuma cries "that Esidi should die", it is no hollow threat. Bon Anné says that if Esidi dies she will just leave her sorcery to her daughter Amakomba. It is at this point that several women join in insulting the absent Amakomba - a young woman who a year earlier was happily moving with them through the forest, living with Nahto as if she were her daughter. Following this Komie complains that talking of sorcery will spoil the next days hunt.

Yuma loudly threatens the absent Amakomba, and then turns to make the food offering to the spirit, thanking the molimo for taking the spirit from the child and giving thanks for this to his ancestors: "Grandfather Bongolo, father Abakenaba: here is our meeting place, here is your forest". Komie calls out from his hut in the darkness, demanding that they concentrate on invoking the ancestors to improve the hunt. One of the young men with the molimo calls out that the ancient and powerful molimo, Ayla, that is at the camp near the village, ought to be here to accompany its great také (enemy and colleague) Potolo. It should be stressed that lacking a molimo trumpet, but needing to make a molimo happen, those bringing Potolo into camp made use of a piece of rubber tyre being rasped against a plastic bidon to create Potolo's eerie sound. The molimo goes, and one of those who was carrying it thanks Ndengi saying: "you allowed me to hear the voice of Potolo, a voice I have never heard before". Nahto calls out to make sure both that the spirit of Akumaké has left his daughter for good and that "Ndengi's net is hot [strong, successful] tomorrow."

Yuma, reasserting his authority by having the last word, combines his attempt to claim the authority of the elders and to use that power to dominate others, by calling out to his ancestors [below in bold] and to the person he is cursing:
My fathers (Baépa), I give the molimo into your hands.
[Listen] person who spoiled my meat yesterday with your evil spirit
My fathers, my elders (Batata), I want to take back your molimo later
It is me who will take it, the molimo that my ancestors handed down.
Grandfather Baluku, I will take Potolo.
The person who spoiled my net, may his stomach inflate eternally unendingly!

Clearly there are many conflicting and converging beliefs, needs and interpretations being voiced in this situation, by different people and by the same person at different moments. For example, the molimo is both treated like an important visitor and is described as a vicious animal; the same person hounds it as if it were a dog (for whom the Mbuti have virtually no respect) and cries *Ahaki*, meaning that it is carrying the power of the forest into camp. It is described as the *Nyama n'endula* (The animal of the forest), and is also addressed as an important ancestor. Yuma treads a difficult line between wanting to assert his personal ownership of the molimo, and yet needing to treat it with great reverence as being a very powerful ancestor, perhaps in order to emphasise that it is a power worth possessing. He also seeks to assert his authority by threatening an absent woman, and the women join in, perhaps to distance themselves from the accused. Accusations of sorcery, the attempt to rid Ndengi of her fathers spirit through food offerings, the debatable power of a hastily put together molimo 'trumpet', the attempt to improve the hunt, are simultaneous and often contradictory currents. Within this event there is not a single authoritative voice of the forest, there is a cacophony of voices.

Normally, however, the cacophony of different voices, demands and conflicts are evident in the early stages of the process, either before the molimo has arrived or in the exchanges between members of the camp and the molimo's 'fool'. In the process of interacting with the molimo, the singing usually increases. The singing may involve rivalry and conflict, but as it continues it gradually arrives at harmony between the different members of the camp, and with the voice of the forest and ancestors itself. As we have seen, this is important if harmony between members of the band is to prevail and the hunt is to be successful. This is the reason why Komie loudly complained about the witchcraft accusations, and even objected to the molimo concentrating on Ndengi's problems rather than the problem the whole camp faced which was poor hunting. The molimo is normally an occasion in which the focus of the camp shifts from individual problems to restoring harmony within the whole. In this case, there was not the usual movement towards singing

and harmony, there was no singing at all, largely because Yuma was using it as an occasion to assert his power.

This particular molimo usefully demonstrates the fluidity of Mbuti and Bila beliefs, and their ability to move between concentrating on the all-encompassing spirit of the forest/ancestors (demanding and legitimising harmony) to asserting the power of a particular ancestor (demanding and legitimising hierarchy). As is clear in this example, the Mbuti, like the Bila, can move between these different aspects of their shared belief system, and asserting hierarchy tends to become dominant when an individual or a group feel themselves to be at the mercy of a more powerful authority. In this case it is Yuma who is at the mercy of the Chef de Groupement's threats and beatings, whereas at the time of Turnbull's writing the Bila collectively experienced themselves as being at the mercy of Belgian power.

The Outcome of this Molimo

The hunt improved dramatically in the following days, and Ndengi appeared to be free of spirit possession. The problem underlying her possession was, according to Yuma, that she hadn't shown respect to the ancestors: she hadn't shaved her head - as is the custom - when her father died. But although his preoccupation was with respect for a particular ancestor, and by implication respect for himself, her problem as it emerged the following week on our return to the village appeared to be very different.

Grinker remarks, of the Lese and Efe, that "when a husband and wife experience great difficulty in their marriage . . . one of the spouses may become ill and go into convulsions" (1994: 163), and this is certainly what had been happening to Ndengi in the forest. Ndengi had left her former husband, Aseli, to become Bon Anné's second wife; with the result that both wives were jealous of each other, and engaged in an intense vying for his attention. Aseli was still furious and hurt, and a huge fight involving the whole village erupted on Christmas day in the village. Although one could argue, with Turnbull, that such conflict and disharmony was the result of the Mbuti being in the village, it would be more appropriate to view the conflict as pre-existing among the Mbuti themselves. Turnbull himself mentions instances in which the whole of an Mbuti forest camp became embroiled in combat as a result of jealousies (1965: 205), and in which a girl was beaten up severely without anybody intervening (1965: 206).

The fighting was only defused after Paulo (who had succeeded Banyé as chief of Utama) made a line in the sand between the area of Mbuti huts where the fight was taking place and

the rest of the Bila village. He shouted at the Mbuti to stay on their side of the line. Paulo was half drunk, as was Yuma, and when Yuma insisted on crossing the line things seemed to be turning ugly between them until Paulo managed to lift the much smaller Yuma up into the air and carry him about.

Paulo felt he had triumphed, while Yuma walked around the Mbuti men scratching them with a downward pull of his fingers across their faces: the same gesture that is done to a boy when he is being circumcised symbolising suffering and obedience. Yuma thereby drew on the fear of the violence that occurs within the context of the nkumbi camp to demand their obedience. Yet the violence within the nkumbi camp between those who have already undergone the nkumbi is, as we shall see, highly reciprocal. It was perhaps in order to avoid receiving back the symbolic violence he had meted out (in the molimo and in this moment of scratching the men's faces) that Yuma made only the briefest of appearances in the nkumbi camp.

Many peoples loyalties had been torn by the conflict between Aseli and Bon Anné, and between Bon Anné's two wives. Komie, for example, was loyal to Bon Anné but was also married to Ndengi's sister and as such had difficulty with Ndengi being treated as a second wife. These conflicts, and the conflict between men and women more generally, were played out following the Christmas fight in the run up to the nkumbi. A ritual which ultimately served to reassert men's friendship, in part through excluding - in its final phase - the men (Aseli, Bon Anné, and Yuma) who had been mainly responsible for the conflict.

Being in the context of the village for the Christmas feasting allowed the festering and largely unspoken conflict to be brought into the open and partially resolved. Clearly the molimo had failed to resolve the underlying tensions in the group largely because Yuma had attempted to hijack it for his own purposes; and his attempt to assert domination was partly the consequence of his structural position as accountable for the camps actions and therefore vulnerable to the abusive power of the Chef de Groupement.

PART IV: VILLAGE

CHAPTER 9 THE NKUMBI and WOMEN'S POWER: Oral history, gender and conflict in the village

This chapter examines the relationship between the Mbuti and the Bila, and between men and women, in the village context. The assertion and subversion of hierarchy is explored through examining women's power in the nkumbi and in the village more generally. The attempt to legitimise hierarchy is only one aspect of the diverse experience of social interdependence in the nkumbi.

THE NKUMBI

Gender and Ethnicity in Oral History and in the Nkumbi

Notions of gender and of ethnicity can be closely linked (Grinker 1994: 73-109). The denigration of women and of the Efe by Lese men, and the parallels between the two which Grinker describes, are nowhere near as straightforward for the Bila. At Utama Bila relations with the Mbuti and men's relations with women are both built on stories of prior ownership: the Mbuti being viewed as the first inhabitants of the forest; and women being seen as the originators of the nkumbi.

What purpose do these parallel stories of prior ownership serve? Are they simply ways of exaggerating Mbuti power on the one hand, and women's power on the other, so that this very exaggeration can provide a pretext for the Bila or the men to reassert power and restate ethnic and gender hierarchy in the nkumbi ritual? Are they simply a way of building up 'straw men' which can then be knocked down in the ritual process? At first sight this would seem to fit in with the conquering of female power by male power, and of Mbuti Chiefs by the Bila Chief, in the nkumbi. However, it does not fit with the actual position of power which women hold in the village and in the nkumbi, nor with the power which the Mbuti display both in everyday relations and within the nkumbi.

A clue to the purpose served by stories of prior ownership - of the forest by the Mbuti, and of the nkumbi by the women - lies in the Bila account of the first meeting between a Bila and an Mbuti:

> The Mbuti and Bila met when the first Mbuti was discovered as he emerged from a big hole in a tree. 'Ah! That is what kind of man?' said the Bila. After this the Mbuti taught the Bila about sex. Up until then the villagers had put medicine in the vagina because they thought it was a wound. . . .The Bila taught the Mbuti not to flee from people, so that we could live together from then on.

In this story the Bila learn the most basic essential necessary for group survival from the Mbuti, while the Mbuti learn sociality with other peoples from the Bila. Learning sexual interaction is exchanged for learning social interaction. This perhaps supports Bahuchet's interpretation of forager/farmer contact since the element of necessity is on the villagers side, but more importantly it gives us a clue as to the nature of this parallel between Mbuti prior possession of the forest and women's prior possession of the nkumbi. The farmers feel a very real dependence on the hunter-gatherers, possibly in Bahuchet's distant past but certainly it is a recurrent theme whenever there is a threat (whether colonial, Simba, or present day) to Bila security. This dependence has to be acknowledged, but the Bila are also asserting that the Mbuti are dependant on them in order to be able to live with others. This assertion is similar to the Lese assertion that: "If the Efe ever separate from the Lese . . . the Efe would be in a situation of chaos or disorder . . . The integration into the Lese social world gives the Efe a place" (Grinker 1994: 108). Through the nkumbi the Bila can seek to subsume the Mbuti within their social world.

In a similar vein the story of Amaima, the woman who was the founder of the nkumbi, speaks of the very real dependence of the men on the women, possibly in the distant past that the stories of Amaima speak of, but certainly both in the recent historical past and in the present. Phelix's story of how the circumcision began with Amaima, but was wrested from her and the women by the men because those circumcised would die instantly, is a story which includes the assertion that the Mbuti are one people with the Bila and must be circumcised with them.

> The *kanja* [circumcision] is the thing which walks with the village . . . it began with the woman Amaima. Now they, the women, *ngbe* [the sound of the knife cutting at circumcision], immediate death. The women were *musa* [before] the men, they were always musa [stronger][30]. Now they are *bahalikono* [they are turned round, dominated].
>
> You, the women, are forbidden from doing this, do not take it up again, you women do not go and arrive over there at the circumcision camp. The *bakanja* [people of the circumcision, i.e. Mbuti and Bila] must be circumcised together because *besu kadi* [we are one], *bakpa kadi* [one people].

In this story, when Amaima cut the children all of them died[31]. When the men wrested the power from the women and cut the children, it was the girls who would die. So since then they have just cut the boys. In Bloch's terms (1989, 1992) we could see both the history and the process of the nkumbi as the need to exaggerate and then overturn everyday knowledge: in this case the everyday knowledge of male dependence on women, and Bila dependence on Mbuti. In Bloch's analysis this is achieved by conquering everyday

30 *musa* means both 'before' and 'stronger'.
31 In some stories, such as that told by the new Bila chief Paulo, only the boys died.

knowledge with ideological knowledge: the triumph of men's power over women, and the subsuming of Mbuti power within the Bila world.

'Rebounding violence' - being conquered by ideology and subsequently conquering others in the name of the ideology - is seen by Bloch as being the "irreducible core of the ritual process" everywhere (1992: 1). Although in looking at the molimo (Chapter 7) this approach ultimately obscured more than it illuminated, there is much evidence to support such an analysis of the nkumbi. However, although seeming to support Bloch's notion that the world of such people is dominated by ideology, in the end this analysis does not fit with the persistence of an everyday knowledge of interdependence.

During the weeks of nkumbi dancing in the village, the strength of women's power, and the precariousness of men's power, was established as clearly as the exclusion of women from the circumcision camp itself. At the same time, below the surface appearance of posturing and competing for power, men's individual experience of the nkumbi appeared to involve a levelling of relationships between men which involves a strengthening of men's friendship across generations and ethnicity.

Perhaps most importantly the ritual is an excuse for people from distant villages to come together, tell stories, dance and socialise; thus conflict happens within a context in which the interdependence between the different groups is heightened. Opposition and solidarity cross-cut in different ways at different times. There is, for example, the singing and dancing of all the women together, and the shuffling dancing and drumming of all the men together. There is the daily meal in which all the men eat together and all the women eat together. There are family meals combining both sexes and in which the Mbuti and Bila are separate, and there are moments when men dance dangerously into the woman's dance. Mbuti and Bila come from far away to take part in the dancing, and to be fed by the village. Underlying it all for eligible young Mbuti and Bila is the fact that this is the place where they are most likely to be able to impress a member of the opposite sex with their dancing, this is the context in which many of them meet their partners.

So although hierarchy is attempted within the nkumbi, it is only one strand in the rope of this tenacious ritual, albeit one which is very important for those who think they wield power. The belief that such a ritual is essentially about the attempt to legitimise hierarchy is simply the perspective of those seeking to assert their power; it is only one aspect of the diverse experience of social interdependence, the expression and exploration of which is the motivating force for individuals participation in the nkumbi.

The Nkumbi and the Resumption of Equality

The nkumbi circumcision ritual was, for Turnbull, the clearest expression of the fundamental opposition between Bila and Mbuti beliefs. He argued that the Mbuti only pretended involvement in the nkumbi, that they did not fear the ancestors, and only revered the forest as being in any sense a 'supernatural' power (e.g. 1965: 65); while for the Bila, he argued that their opposition to the Mbuti is played out in the nkumbi in a fruitless attempt to establish supernatural domination over the Mbuti. The simple picture of attempted domination by the Bila on the one hand, and pretended participation by the Mbuti on the other, does not reflect the complex intense nature of the occasion. While Turnbull argues that the Mbuti are unaffected by the whole process (1965: 69) and simply participate in order to establish exchange relations with villagers (1961: 203-204; 1965: 63-65); the Mbuti at Utama enter into the whole process as reluctantly or as fully as their Bila neighbours.

The attempted domination of the Mbuti by the Bila, as a result of Belgian domination of the Bila, during Turnbull's earlier fieldwork clearly gave rise to a very definite ethnic difference between those who sought to dominate (the Bila) and those who found such an attempt amusing (the Mbuti). After his subsequent return to the Ituri in the 1970's, Turnbull argued that the nkumbi had changed profoundly, as a result of the disturbances during the Simba rebellion which had resulted in the Bila living with the Mbuti in the forest:

> . . . this time there was much greater emphasis on the *ritual* necessity for [Mbuti] presence. They also took a much more prominent part than ever before in the various *barazza* discussions concerning the running of the *nkumbi*. (1983: 108)

The importance and relative equality ascribed to the Mbuti in this passage contrasts sharply with his earlier descriptions of Bila arrogance: "a pygmy boy is sent first 'to clean the knife" (1961: 197). By contrast, at Utama, although one boy is always cut a day before the rest, he can be either Bila or Mbuti, and he is described, respectfully, as the elder brother of that nkumbi whether he is an Mbuti or a Bila.

"The spiritual worlds of the two populations" were (after the Simba Rebellion) seen by Turnbull "as at least complementary, if not united" (1983: 130). This contrasts sharply with his earlier description of "there being an unalterable gulf between the two worlds of the two people" (1961: 204). After the Simba Rebellion "[t]he villagers' fear of the forest, a fear rooted in the belief that the forest was filled with hostile spirits, if not a hostile entity in itself, had now been replaced . . .", and "it even seemed that the villagers had come to

accept something of the Mbuti belief in Spirit rather than spirits . . ." (1983: 130). In this context, Turnbull argued that the Mbuti now joined the nkumbi not only because of the "political and economic advantages that it conveyed to them [but also] because of what seemed a perceived need to come to terms with the villagers supernatural and to acquire some measure of control in that sphere" (1983: 130-131). As was evident in looking at their oral history, the Mbuti are seen by the Bila to have come to their rescue on previous occasions, and it would be more accurate to view their shared experience of the Simba years not as something fundamentally new but as having helped to re-establish their awareness of their fundamental interdependence, after the disruption and opposition engendered by the colonial era.

Preparation for the Nkumbi

For the nkumbi to be successful required the active participation of the Mbuti, as Phelix - who was the *tendé*, the doctor of the circumcision, and was organising the nkumbi with the new Bila Chief Paulo - explained:

> The work of the Bambuti to help us with the *kanja* [nkumbi] is necessary [so] that we can offer *mbuti* [forest food] to delight the visitors who come from very far. Also to play [their part; i.e. sing, drum, dance, etc.]; and to give *tédo* [weight] to us [i.e. to increase our numbers]. We can't leave the Mbuti behind, they are the people our ancestors gave us . . .we walk together as one. It is like that.

The dancing and singing that would lead up to the nkumbi was preceded by the invocation of the ancestors, made in a small clearing in the forest. Only Bila and Mbuti men were allowed to be present, and Mbuti such as Komie threw themselves into the first task, that of uprooting the sacred Ambaka tree, before Bon Anne and Phelix sacrificed a cock, and everyone cooked and ate it with rice: offering a portion to the ancestors, as is done to ensure a good harvest or a good hunt.

Uprooting the Ambaka tree was part of the process of calling on the spirit of the forest, and of the ancestors. The invocation spoken after the uprooting involved Phelix calling on the dead *tendé* - the former specialists of the nkumbi - to join them and to authorise the holding of the nkumbi. In the same invocation he called on Isiah, the other ritual specialist of the village, to return from Epulu to take part in the nkumbi, and called on the ancestors to send Isiah from Epulu: the boundary between dead and living elders was not as important as ensuring the presence of both. Uprooting the Ambaka tree without cutting the roots both symbolised and embodied the reason for why men had usurped the control of the nkumbi from the women. The inability of Amaima to uproot the tree was symbolic of her inability to cut without killing the boys:

> The spirit . . . sits in the roots of this tree. Ambaka is a thing which we uproot, it is the great spirit which Amaima failed [to uproot]. She left her children to die, she couldn't uproot it.

Amaima is not only condemned but also revered by the men, as when Phelix said: "*Maipa* [the women's dance] is in memory of their mother, it was she alone who started the *Kanja* [nkumbi], so we can't/won't leave it aside".

The Ambaka tree was turned into the first and biggest of the eleven makata sticks, each stick being cut to a different length and tuned to a different pitch by whittling away at the thickness of the wood. When they were all finished, eleven men walking in single file could carry their length of stick under their left arm and, tapping it with another shorter stick, played what was in effect a collective xylophone. The bark of the trees used to make these was stripped with teeth rather than a knife: an echo of the need to uproot the Ambaka tree without damaging the roots, and hence of their ability to circumcise without killing.

Any newcomer arriving at the clearing was tumbled to the ground by their *kalé* (those who had undergone the nkumbi with them). If anybody used the customary way of addressing another as noko (brother-in-law) then they would be subject to a friendly or not-so-friendly physical assault and reprimand by their kalé.

The affirmation of affinal relations - normally so central to maintaining the flexibility necessary in Bila and Mbuti relations with all outsiders who are potentially insiders - was forbidden in this context. In this context it was a mistake to use this address between anyone, and for the purposes of the nkumbi the Mbuti and Bila were now one people, and would together have to provide the food, music and dancing necessary not only for the ritual but to entertain and impress visitors from other villages and camps who would weigh up the strength of the village from the quality of the festival. An evaluation that would also have a bearing on the visitors assessment of the desirability of marrying into, or moving into, the village and the hunting camps associated with it.

Between the start of the nkumbi and the circumcision there were three weeks of drumming, singing, dancing and feasting in the village. Returning from the invocation Phelix carried a bundle of the leaves from the uprooted tree; Paulo carried a white mask which he had danced in; and Kanjalai carried the bark from the tree and from the other saplings that were used to make the makata sticks. The *makata* sticks were played by Mbuti, and carried in order of their size by Chief Yuma, Aposi, Ndume, Bon Anne, Aseli, Amangolai, Mokubwa, Tumbelo, Komie, Asakao, and lastly Yuma (son of Nahto). Once at the village

an nkumbi was lit next to one of the small cemeteries, and was kept continuously alight throughout the festival, and was used to reheat the drums to make their skins taught again.

Asserting the power of tradition and the ancestors, both Phelix and Paulo reverted to wearing traditional loincloths in place of their usual shorts and trousers. All the makata playing Mbuti wore bright loincloths as they danced: stamping out rhythms as they shuffled forward in time, their bells of battered metal round their ankles rattling out accompaniment as the stamping shook the pebbles inside them.

The next day the line of makata players made its way first to Tonane and then to Seti. The men's faces were painted with white leopard spots, stars or spider shapes; and offerings of food were collected from each house, the few recent Nande incomers giving by far the most being uncertain of the amount expected. At Utama the women began singing and dancing their circle dance for Amaima. The men began snaking their single line, accompanying the drumming with rythmic foot stamping and anklet shaking. All the men who danced had been through the nkumbi, while the women's dance involved women and girls of all ages. The men's dancing line never makes a complete circle, since it is in the act of the circumcision itself that two halves of a circle are made to join.

Over the next few weeks the men took to dancing all day and the women all night, with both groups dancing in different parts of the village on the Saturdays and Sundays when crowds of people poured in from nearby and distant villages and hunting camps. The nearest large band of Mbuti - from Bandisendi to the west - came in large numbers and bright loincloths on the weekends, the men dancing in a separate line to that of the Utama Mbuti, although to the same three drums. There was clear competition: on one level between the two bands; but more importantly from an individuals point of view the competition was to attract the attention of the women who - no matter what band or village they were from - danced the Maipa circle dance together.

Where the men's dance involved little contact, the women's dance often took the form of a complex circling of each other which made room for them to dance with each other. Meanwhile children formed circles and lines, imitating the dances and also individuals. Bila women would join the Maipa dance, which the Mbuti women led, and Bila men would join the snaking Mbuti men's dance. Certain Mbuti men were held in high esteem by others and were sought after by the women. Ndume was known to have married the woman thought of as the beauty of the camp (Kanjalai's daughter Charlotte) partly because his dancing and drumming was unashamedly unique and creative. Meanwhile many men watched and

spoke of the way Ndengi danced, and the reason for why Bon Anne had fought Aseli for her became clear. Women and men from distant camps took the opportunity to remake old friendships, and to benefit from the feasting that was an essential part of the preparations for the nkumbi.

When the women first gathered to begin their night-long singing, Charlotte's sister Safina calmed her eighteen month old son - who had become frightened of her newly painted white face - by saying: "why are you frightened of your own mum? We are singing to our ancestors the forest". The phrase she used was *Besu bénimbo batata n'endula. Batata* meaning ancestors, literally many grandparents; and *endula* meaning the forest. The sentence encapsulates the way in which living elders, ancestors and the forest, form a continuum which can be collapsed into a single entity, or drawn out into separate, but not mutually exclusive, categories.

The songs which the women sang were often refrains repeating a single line such as: *Tépé abégalio éma,* 'the monkey glances at the woman', a song inviting sexual innuendo and a flirtatious form of dancing; or *Bénu bakupini Ituri kanga bawéka imé amai,* meaning 'we don't want the people across the Ituri [river] to call me sister-in-law'. To a certain extent any name or sentence would do, it was the harmony and creative variation that mattered. There was thus a sharp contrast between the women's singing which allowed for individual harmonies (just as their dancing allowed for individual or collective creativity), and the men's music making and dancing which more clearly followed a particular ritual form. Individuals like Ndume could, however, bring great individuality to the dancing; and Sale, drumming for the women, could create his own pathway of rhythms, rather than follow the well worn track of tradition.

Bloch's argument, concerning the way in which ritual limits the creativity and individuality allowed in speech, song and dance, as it seeks to impose the collective ideology on individual experience, is relevant here. In this nkumbi it was clear that in general the women were freer to be creative while the men experienced much more constraint. Chief Paulo's made demands on the men, while the women made decisions collectively. Thus, although one can see that ritual need not demand conformity, there is a clear correlation between the extent to which individuals are involved in asserting their power and the extent to which they have to relinquish their individuality. Interestingly, men attempted to catch peoples attention and express their individuality by borrowing and wearing bright coloured new loincloths; whereas women often wore old cloth, but attracted attention through the nature of their individual dance.

Plate 6. **The Mangaluama Spirit in the Nkumbi**

Case Study: Whipping in the forest and the village

The reciprocal whipping, which was indulged in by many young hunters in the hunting camps in the period leading up to the nkumbi, played a prominent part in the preparations. In the forest nobody was forced to take part, but many young hunters appeared to do so to prove themselves, especially Bon Anne and Komie. In the village, just as in the camp, the man doing the whipping would immediately be whipped in turn by another.

On one occasion Paulo pulled Mokubwa, Kanjalai's son, and his own son Roger, into the centre of where the men were dancing. Roger was stoical and willing. Mokubwa, a vain but gentle man, was more than reluctant: he was angry at having pain inflicted on him, for him the excitement was pointless and the fact of 'revenge' - that the person who had whipped him would subsequently be whipped - was no consolation. Mokubwa was whipped by Paulo (a Bila), and Roger by Aposi (an Mbuti). After which Phelix whipped Paulo, but Aposi slipped away.

The reciprocity evident in the whipping represents a broader equality, particularly between those who have undergone the same nkumbi, which means that many Mbuti take advantage of the occasion to mercilessly ridicule any villager who has attempted to maintain a distance and has given the impression of thinking himself superior to them. Mokubwa managed to avoid the whip after that, but he continued to enjoy the dancing and socialising and dressing in whoever bright loincloth he could manage to get hold of.

Unlike Dieu Donner, who only dared turn pass through early on to sell Paulo the state papers which officially permitted the nkumbi to go ahead; the popular Bila chief Batomine, whom Dieu Donner had usurped, took part in the final crowded days of the celebrations. Although Dieu Donner walked away with some extra money in his pocket, it was also known that he walked forever in fear of his life. Batomine gained no wealth from the occasion but was welcomed and his son, the man seen as his successor, played a prominent part as the *mangaluama* spirit whose dance would often become the focus of the occasion. Batomine's presence and Dieu Donner's absence symbolised the power of social interdependence in the face of the assertion of hierarchy, of peoples preference for those who treated them well over someone who was forever attempting to control them and extract wealth both from celebrations and from misfortune.

Phelix authority rested on his popularity and on his work as a healer and ritual specialist[32] and so he had little need to assert his authority. Chief Paulo, unlike Phelix, worked hard to assert his authority, sometimes alienating as much support as he appeared to be securing. Although he controlled much of the proceedings and threw himself into the dancing, the provision of food, and the disciplining of the initiation candidates, and although he staged a mock fight with Aposi which he was 'victorious' in, ultimately he had to bow to the collective decision of the tendé ritual specialists from Utama and the surrounding villages, and postpone the actual circumcision for several days beyond the date he had wished. It was a small matter but it mirrored the contrast between the position of Batomine and Dieu Donner. Paulo's wish to carry out the circumcision ritual early became a test of who controlled the events, and it turned out that such a central ritual was not in the hands of the man who was seeking to assert his political authority in his new role as village chief, but was in the hands of the elders and ritual specialists who do not have the same explicit political power, but who wield the knife at the circumcision and who speak to and for the ancestors and for the people present more generally. In the event their decision allowed the climax of the dancing to continue for another two days, which was what was generally wanted.

Prior to the circumcision itself, with energy and enthusiasm at a high pitch, almost all the Bila and Mbuti men worked together clearing secondary forest to expand the village shambas of Paulo, Phelix, Bamootilita, Jacqui and finally Bisaili. As they cleared the tangled undergrowth they sang about the *likiri*, the conscripts joining the army. The boys being prepared for the circumcision had there heads shaved like conscripts and the bereaved. Entering the nkumbi carries this sense both of going into combat, being tested to the extreme, and of grieving for a death. Manika, the oldest Bila woman in the village, shaved the heads of those entering the nkumbi, and painted their heads red which carries connotations of blood, death and danger. Every day women would lead the initiates on a fast march wearing loincloths made out of bark cloth which was dyed red: the Bila boys carrying machetes, and the Mbuti boys carrying long sticks symbolising spears.

The Nkumbi Camp

When the dancing was at it's highest pitch, the first initiate was led from the Mbuti hut in the village where they had been guarded throughout the celebrations. As with the Mbuti elima celebration of a girls first menstruation, the women form a blockade and can stop any man from following the path from the village to the nkumbi camp in the forest; only letting

32 Phelix's authorisation as a state registered traditional doctor, and as a doctor of the nkumbi, came not from the ministry of health, but from the ministry of culture and the arts.

through the initiate and any man who has good reason to be present at the boy's circumcision. I ran with Bon Anne, managing to leap past two women as he was brought tumbling to the ground by Safina. Beyond this the path was full of danger and threat, guarded by Mbuti and Bila men with whips.

It was quite possible that Bon Anne was wanting to be felled before arriving since the levelling process of reciprocal violence in the camp was particularly directed at those - like himself - who had exerted more power than others, for it is they who need more levelling down. For the same reason, despite his central role in ensuring there was enough meat for the village and in leading the makate music, Chief Yuma only made an appearance in camp for the brief period during the circumcision of Chief Paulo's twins, a moment when everybodies attention was directed at the circumcision itself and not at levelling down.

I am not at liberty to write anything specific about what happened in the circumcision camp, but in general terms everyone was involved in reciprocal violence; and I, like Bon Anne, required a reasonable amount of levelling. However once someone inflicted a punishment on someone else they automatically brought the same or worse down upon themselves from a third person. The pain is temporary and reciprocal, whereas the humour and comradeship persists; it is a process which involves learning to trust that pain has its limits. That shared experience of abuse, or that shared experience of overcoming suffering with comradeship (depending on ones point of view) gave them both the right and the ability to be present and fully involved. Through being willing to undergo suffering like anybody else, I was welcomed into the reciprocity of the nkumbi.

Singing was a counterpoint to the violence, and whenever a wild old Mbuti man leapt into camp out of the forest, everyone stopped whatever they were doing and paid complete attention to him. He had the same wildness about him that Aposi had when he fought, and was defeated by Chief Paulo. It was as if this old man was attempting to stop the ritual, and there was the sense that he might. The initiates were forbidden from speaking back to their elders, or reciprocating violence, their task being submission. It was explained to me as being as necessary as the discipline that happens when you enter the army. For throughout the period in the nkumbi camp the initiates would be subject to discipline, punishment and violence; as well as being required to sing all night and to learn from their elders.

Some people, particularly the initiates undergoing the pain of being conquered by their elders and ancestors, would find Bloch's (1992) description of this ritual process entirely

accurate. Yet to claim that this is the central experience of ritual is no more true of the nkumbi than it was of the molimo. To see the nkumbi as being above all about the boy being initiated, or as being about men asserting their dominance and excluding women, is to miss the reason why people participate in it. Those wielding power (and all individuals in those moments when they are seeking to wield power) through the ritual process, are more or less successful at asserting hierarchy and their powerful position in it. But meanwhile: Dieu Donner scuttles through, the men's creativity is restricted by their position, Yuma (and possibly Bon Anne) is too fearful to stay in the camp, Chief Paulo does not have his way with deciding when the circumcision happens, the muzungu (myself, Mbiané) cannot just adopt a safe observer position.

To the extent that people seek to place themselves above others, they are cut off from the spontaneity, creativity and friendship made possible through ritual as much as any other form of social interaction. Particular examples of these are the spontaneity of the women's singing, the welcome accorded Batomine and his son, the attraction generated by the individuality of Ndume' or Ndengi's dancing. But more fundamentally the nkumbi provides a context for the expression and exploration of social interdependence, including the exploration of those forms which - through their attempt to assert control and dominance - seek to deny the social interdependence which is the fundamental reality of such an occasion.

WOMEN'S POWER

Women's Power in the Nkumbi

The women's re-enactment of Amaima's power in the Maima dance can be seen either as an assertion of women's power, or as a way in which such power is asserted prior to it being brought under male control. Although the nkumbi camp is closed to women, and the camp, the act of circumcision, and the ideology which accompanies it, all point to the ritual as an assertion of male power over women: this can be badly thrown off the mark by the reality of women's power.

The initiates once they return from the camp are supposed to be permitted or encouraged to whip their sister just as they will have been whipped for weeks. However the story that everyone tells of Bamootilita subverts this ideology. When she was young, her younger brother returned from the nkumbi camp and was too frightened to run through the gauntlet of elders wielding whips to reach his clothes at the far end of the village in order to resume village life. Bamootilita stepped forward and, of her own volition, took his place: running

the gauntlet and retrieving his clothes for him. It is an oft told story, strengthening the picture of women as the powerful centre of the everyday in Utama.

One morning before dawn those few Bila and Mbuti women who had kept up the singing through the small hours of the night were relishing the exuberance of the dancing, now that their numbers had swelled as dawn approached, prior to giving way to the men to continue the ritual through the day. Sale's highly individual drumming, and the high spirits and inventiveness of the women, was a potent mix. Komie, the young Mbuti renowned for being the toughest hunter, and the man most likely to lose touch with reality through becoming too stoned on cannabis, attempted to enter the circle of women dancing around the fire in order to break up and disperse their dance. Carrying a big bidon on his head in mockery of women's work, he rushed up to women as if about to attack them in a mock sexual, mock aggressive, fashion.

Manika, the most elderly and unfit Bila woman, picked up a burning log from the central fire and, moving slowly, 'chased' him off, scattering the burning embers at him. Then the Mbuti elder, Nahto, led all the women in a dance around the whole village: ending with an exuberant circling around each other and around the fire; before taking their leave of Amaima and finally stopping as dawn arrived. The last song was the refrain *wébagiato Amaima* - 'stay well Amaima'. *Wébagiato* being the word of farewell one speaks to someone who is *staying* as one is leaving. This implied that it was not Amaima who was leaving them as the dance drew to a close, but they who were taking leave of her. She endured in the ritual space they had all occupied, while they moved back to the everyday. It was now the men's turn to dance, the women having given way to them from a position of strength rather than weakness. In this dance, just when men should have been asserting their control, the women doubled their effort and intensified their assertion of power.

Bila Women's Power in the Past and in the Present

Women's power, although evident in the context of the nkumbi, is even more clearly present within the everyday, and in stories of the past which affirm their position in the present.

The people at Utama are referred to by other villages as the *Bandicambwa*. *Bandi* meaning 'the group of', or 'descendants of'. *Mbwa* is a shortened version of the name of the woman from whom all the family at Utama can trace their descent. Her name was Mbwanbwa and she was married to Akombisa, however it is she and not he who is

remembered: both in the clans name and in the stories that are told of her ability to deal effectively with the Belgians in the colonial period.

A more recent historical figure is Bwanji Mwatatu who, following the end of the Simba rebellion, quarrelled with her brothers. Not wanting to live with them any more, she moved towards Tonani. Since she wouldn't move back to the original site, her brothers suggested that they should all move to half way between her and them. Bwanji was the first to move to what then became the new village site at Utama, the present position of the village being attributed to her. As with the story of the founder of the nkumbi or the founder of the clan, this could be interpreted in different ways. However it is the *reality* of women's power in the present which means that these stories carry weight. Unlike many other villages there is no telé in Utama. A telé is a veranda in which the men of a village sit and talk and watch people walk by on the road, shouting greetings and inviting visitors in to rest for a while. At Utama the meeting places are the women's cooking fires, and in particular that of Bamootilita. In the evening men and women will either eat together, or next to each other by these fires; and it is here that passers-by will rest.

While both Bila men and women work their shambas, and most of them spend time in hunting camps; it is the older women who form the permanent nucleus of the village. These women, such as Bamootilita and her elder sisters, remain in the village. Their only brother had long since died; and their husbands are either dead, absent or quiet. Bamootilita remarried after the death of her first husband, but she had no children with her second husband, and although he visited during the nkumbi, she chose to return to Utama rather than live in his village far from her family.

Bisaili returned to Utama from the village of Koki where he was the local chief, only after his mother had returned to Utama. After returning, he lived in an annexe of his mothers house, although he kept talking of building his own home. His sister Jacqui also lived in a small room on the other side of her mothers house. She didn't talk much about building her own house, but during the course of the nkumbi she paid Roger two grammes of gold to help her build one just across the road. Jacqui was of the firm opinion that "it is easier to live without a man, if you have a man then you have much more work to do!".

While the power of the ancestors was evoked explicitly by the men during the nkumbi, it was often the women who spoke for the ancestors in everyday life. Two incidents highlight this fact, and in so doing highlight the power of women in the village context. The first concerned the former chief, Banyé who had previously had a Lese wife whom he

had left for the Mbuti woman, Alimoya; and Alimoya and he were clearly very happy together. Although Banyé stood up for himself and the village when they were under pressure from Dieu Donner, his manner was gentle and he was not interested in ordering people about. Most of the Bila agreed that he must give up his marriage to Alimoya, or at least take a proper village wife as well, but most vocal among these was the physically powerful, sometimes hysterical, elder sister of Banyé who had recently returned to the village: Maria Asindiya.

Maria had recently returned to Utama after her husband died, and together with the other women, she made Banyé's life miserable: forcing him to choose between Alimoya and staying in the village at all, let alone staying as chief. Banyé was furious and he and Alimoya left for Banana to the east, where Alimoya's Mbuti family came from. There he built a small house near the Epulu River and resumed his fishing; and after Maria had helped send them packing, she moved into the house in the village which Banyé had been constructing.

The second incident concerns the Nande Jean who, although he had married into the family, lived as far from the rest of the family as possible, while remaining just this side of the village border with the neighbouring village of Seti. He had had an affair with another Bila woman, Susan, while he was in the hunting camps, and on his return had intended to build a house for Susan near to his present one, thereby clearly stating that he now had two wives. However, since his first wife was of the village it was she, or rather her family as a whole, who owned the land. With the backing of the rest of the women in the village, she refused Jean permission to construct a house for Susan and Jean had to back down. Banyé described Jean's relationship with Susan as "an affair of the forest that can't survive the village and the light of day". Shortly after this Susan returned to Mambasa.

In response to the power being exerted over him, Jean refused to let his wife attend the nkumbi in Utama; and Banyé's younger brother Gregoire commented that Jean had better watch out because the ancestors would not like him stopping his wife from celebrating the nkumbi. Gregoire's comment referred both to the ancestors who were called on to bless the nkumbi, and to ancestors such as Bamootilita. As Kopytoff asserted for people throughout central Africa (1971): the distinction between living and dead ancestors is not as important as that between elders (dead or alive, male or female) and those younger than them. This was perhaps especially true within the heightened context of the nkumbi.

Many men avoided the violence of the nkumbi camp itself, but enjoyed the dancing and singing, and the heightened sociability in the lead up to the nkumbi; and - from the evidence outlined above - I expect most women were glad to go without the pain of participating in the nkumbi camp.

If we identify power with explicit positions of power, such as that of Dieu Donner, Paulo or Yuma, - and if we locate political power as resting in those positions and places, such as the nkumbi camp, which lay claim to power by virtue of exclusion - then it is easy to argue that men are the ones who hold political power in the village context. However, as Annette Weiner comments, "we have led ourselves to believe that, if women are not dominant in the political sphere of interaction, their power remains at best peripheral" (1976: 228). Weiner describes how this can be completely misleading. In the Trobriand Islands, for example,

> women's power over cosmic (ahistorical) time is singularly within their own domain. Women, through their wealth, also enter into the historical domain of men. But here their power is less complete because they share the stage with men. . . . Trobriand women participate on both the social and cosmic planes, but men are limited to the social (1976:231).

Weiner arrives at this conclusion because she is looking at "a wider range of resources than socio-political phenomena" and, for her, politics "does not appear as the ultimate measure of power but as power of a particular nature" (1976: 229). We have seen how Bila women's power can equal that of men on the socio-political level, in terms of the coercive model of power based on exclusion. This happened within the nkumbi dance, but more prosaicaly it was evident in excluding Jean from having a second wife, and in excluding Banyé from the chiefship and ultimately from the village itself. But here, in looking at power, we need to look at a wider range of resources. In terms of the power to create and re-create the village, both in the stories people tell of the past and in peoples experience in the present, it is women who occupy the central role. It is men - moving between villages, or between the forest and the village - who's power on this level is peripheral.

Weiner concludes that in many societies "the power of men is continually expended in attempts to assume and incorporate the power of women" (1976: 235). Such societies, she says, often exclude women from men's cult houses and from ritual secrets, and have myths which explain "the way men once stole power and control over objects from women" (1976: 235). The men's nkumbi, and the story of it's origin, clearly fits into this pattern; but in Weiner's opinion, so too, perhaps, does economic, artistic and scientific striving in the West. Weiner asks whether men in the West have come to disregard the

importance of death, regeneration and the continuation of life; and instead "pursue the means to their own immortality through objects, symbols, and scientific exploration that have little to do with regenesis?" (1976: 235). In conclusion Weiner suggests that there is not only a strong denial of women's power of fertility and regeneration in such societies, but also an attempt to "gain greater control over others and so destroy the value of individual autonomy" (1976: 236). She asks whether "this alienation create[s] a disregard for the subjective nature of human beings? When human life is only valued as something to be controlled. . . women's concern in life, death, and regeneration is marginalized, displaced by men's part in the socio-political sphere" (ibid).

Weiner's perspective sheds an illuminating light on the relative power of women and men in Utama. However, like Turnbull's opposition between the Mbuti and the Bila, it is more useful if taken as an ideal type model than if it is applied rigidly to the two genders. By this I mean that, while we have seen many ways in which men expend energy asserting control of others and excluding women, we have also seen many instances in which women control and exclude men. The point would appear to be that both women and men can choose - by not using their time attempting to grasp and hold onto political power - to assert a different form of power which is an expression and experience of social interdependence. There is a strong contrast between those who (in this situation) most clearly embody the former ideal type of control, and those who (in this particular situation) most clearly embody the latter. Among the former are Dieu Donner, Paulo, Mariya Asindiya, Yuma and Bon Anne. Among the latter are Batomine, Banyé, Nahto, Sale and Ndume. What is most illuminating in Wiener's analysis is her suggestion that we should see political power not "as the ultimate measure of power but as power of a particular nature"; and one which may involve "a disregard for the subjective nature of human beings" (1976: 236). A disregard which, in place of the relationships built on that 'regard', strives for compensation and control.

Later chapters in this thesis examine the attempt at exclusion, compensation and control involved in the policies and cosmology of conservation, and examine whether conservation could instead be based on an understanding of inclusion and interdependence. Having seen the centrality of inclusion and interdependence in the hunting camps, and its persistence even within the attempt to impose hierarchy in the nkumbi; the following chapter concentrates on the importance of affinity, flexibility and inclusiveness in the village context.

CHAPTER 10 MOVING THE VILLAGE: Sorcery, affinity, and conflict with the Forest Reserve

Different reactions to the reserve are explored in the light of the importance to the Bila of flexibility in the boundary drawn between village members and others, a flexibility evident both in sorcery accusations and in the position of affines.

The Bila and Mbuti share similar beliefs concerning sorcery, and parallels are drawn between sorcery beliefs and the position of affines. The sharp contrast between the Lese and the Bila (examined in Chapter 2) is reiterated here in their opposing experience of insiders and outsiders. The importance for the Bila (as for the Mbuti) of renegotiating identity through flexible kinship relations and the relocation of villages, brings them into direct conflict with the Forest Reserve.

SORCERY BELIEFS AMONG THE MBUTI AND THE BILA

Sorcery Beliefs in Turnbull's Writing

Fear of sorcery, trickery and evil spirits in the forest is portrayed by Turnbull as being a superstition held only by the Bila: among the Mbuti "[t]here is significantly no talk of a resort to magic or witchcraft or sorcery, and the mention of the evil spirits is accompanied by no belief in them" (1965: 241). In his account, the Mbuti use stories of evil spirits and sorcery simply to keep the villagers fearful of the forest or to amuse themselves. However, as we have seen, such fears and beliefs can be just as real for the Mbuti. A rereading of *Wayward Servants* suggests that accusations of sorcery, and fear of evil spirits, were important aspects of life for the Mbuti at Epulu in Turnbull's time, just as they are today.

The 'Legend of double trickery' is retold by Turnbull (1965: 241-243, 303-307) to illustrate the use Mbuti make of tales of sorcery to frighten the Bila from entering the forest, or to account for why they no meat for their exchange partners. In fact the story demonstrates that villagers were happy to go far into the forest, and how Mbuti feared being cheated by the spirits of their dead in the forest. Sometimes Mbuti tales of spirits are to amuse themselves and to mock the villagers; at other times the same person will believe in sorcery and evil spirits, and the same people will deceive each other. The same Cephu who was applauded for cheating a villager (Turnbull 1961: 125) was later punished for seeking to deceive his fellow Mbuti (1965: 197). Deception, as well as belief in evil spirits and sorcery, clearly crosses the divide which Turnbull saw as unbridgeable.

The Mbuti sorcery accusations discussed in Chapter 8 also contradict Turnbull's claim that "[t]he pygmies practise no sorcery or witchcraft" (1961: 205). The direct contradiction between Turnbull's claim and my experience is due to his reading all Mbuti behaviour in the light of his idealised opposition between village and forest. If an Mbuti appeared to believe in witchcraft, in Turnbull's eyes they were therefore either peculiar individuals, or they meant something else. Accusations of sorcery are put down to following "the custom without following the belief" (1965: 209); or are described as happening because "they already had a grievance against a certain person and chose this way of expressing it" (1965: 75). When he hears "several pygmies accuse old Sau" of being a witch, he says that "although they used the village word they meant something quite different by it. They meant no more than that she was accused of making trouble" (1961: 205). This may have been the case, but under different circumstances the same accusation may carry much more hostility with, as we have seen, sometimes fatal results.

Sorcery beliefs at Utama

The fear or attempt to assert power involved in sorcery accusations, sometimes seem more like play-acting, and sometimes seem to carry a real threat. Sorcery is a powerful feature of daily life for everyone from the Mbuti in forest camps to the Bila in the village; from gold panners in the Ituri River and success seekers in Kinshasa, right the way through to Mobutu. The same person - be they Mbuti, Bila or Nande - can laugh at people for believing others possess such powers; can describe the reality of such powers and their abhorrence of them; and can also claim that they have such powers.

Sorcery, at Utama, takes the three major forms. *Giri-giri* is used to place protection on peoples fields and houses, and consists of medicines or charms used to protect one against others or to ensure harm comes to others. *Liso* is an illness or poison, put into you by a sorcerer; while the person(*twa hodio liso*) who cuts your skin to extract the liso is in a sense a good sorcerer. Nyangé, a middle aged Mbuti man is renowned for being an expert at this; but it is also thought that he might be a dangerous sorcerer because he must know the secrets in order to be able to counteract the liso.

Pololi is different in that it is recognised by the law, and people can be taken to court charged with using pololi to murder and control the spirit of their victim after their victim's death. That a person has been killed using pololi is evident if they still sweat and their body is still warm long after death, in which case their spirit is said to be still working for their murderer.

Formerly pololi was always used within families; but it is now believed to be used more widely. The person using the pololi (*twa pololi*) gets it from a specialist who will create a specific pololi which will make the dead person's spirit work at their speciality. Fishing if they were a fisherman, hunting if they were a hunter, money if they were a white person[33]. There is always the danger however that the dead spirit will enter the person who has used the pololi making them behave violently in a supernaturally powerful way.

Case study: Aposi, pololi and murder

Aposi and his younger daughter Nahto went to visit his eldest daughter who had married an Mbuti at Teturi. The elder daughter's husband promptly took Nahto as his second wife, and shortly afterwards the husband died. Aposi began to be increasingly successful on the hunt; and was accused of being a sorcerer, of having used pololi to kill his son-in-law, and of thereby forcing the dead man's spirit to work for him and so cause many antelope to enter Aposi's nets.

A short while after Aposi and his daughter Nahto returned to Utama a letter arrived from Teturi addressed to Umatatu, the Chef de Groupement at Bandisende, and Aposi and Nahto were taken to prison at Bandisende. She remained there, while Aposi managed to be released after three days, to return to Utama in time for the Christmas fight. His release also meant it was possible for him to participate in the tense but mock fight with the Bila chief Paulo during the nkumbi. During this he acted like a deranged and weak opponent wielding an axe, whom Paulo defeated easily with his spear; and the need for him to be present for this moment of defeat, for Paulo to assert his 'control' over the Mbuti, appeared to be part of the reason for his release.

The belief that the person practising pololi can control the spirit of their victim (and that there is always the danger that the dead spirit might control and possess them) points to a keen awareness of the dangers inherent in traversing kinship boundaries, and the dangers inherent in the flexible notions of affinity which are so central to Mbuti and Bila group membership. Such flexible boundaries create the danger of being 'consumed' by those who should remain clearly differentiated from one.

As was outlined in relation to national politics in Chapter 3 and in relation to the Nande and the Bila in Chapter 4, accusations of sorcery are often tied into accusations of cannibalism not simply at the local but also at the national level. For power and politics in Central Africa

33 *mépo* in KiBila, *amanjenjé* in KiMbuti, *muzungo* in KiNgwana

are not just to do with transformation but with consumption, with the spirit: "the assumption is often that those who can 'eat' materially are able to do so because they are able to 'eat' their victims spiritually" (Schatzberg 1993: 448). The connection between eating and sorcery was made by Yuma in a speech in which he called on those in the forest camp to sleep soundly, and for whoever was cursing his hunting net with sorcery to stop. He ended by saying "the world is for eating, my children . . . leave the night to the dogs" by which he meant that only sorcerers walk in the night. Thus it is not only the Bila but also the Mbuti, the Nande, and many others who use the language of sorcery and witchcraft to struggle with issues of structure and agency, of power and powerlessness, of insider and outsider.

CONTRASTING THE BILA AND THE LESE

Sorcery Beliefs, and the Role of Affinity

For the Lese there is a sharp distinction between who is a member of the village and who is not, and thus between accusations of sorcery - which are made by the members of one Lese village against those of another - and accusations of witchcraft - which are made between neighbours and kin within the same village. As we saw in Chapter 2 there is a similarly sharp distinction for the Lese between the village and the forest, and between the power of men and the position of women.

Grinker's statement that "I was never able to interview sorcerers (few will ever admit to their practices)" appears to imply a belief in their existence despite the fact that the outcome of sorcery accusations (which among the Lese are only directed against people in other villages) would indicate that it is the accusation in itself which is the unifying point for those involved (1994: 163)[34]. Identifying who is a witch is, by contrast, the purpose of witchcraft accusations among the Lese, often uniting Lese and Efe partners against other partners of the same village.

For the Bila the distinction between outsiders and insiders - which is central to the Lese distinction between external sorcerers and internal witches - is kept deliberately vague, being mediated through the flexible boundaries that surround who is defined as an affine. The Bila at Utama do, however, make a distinction between sorcery and witchcraft: a distinction between sorcery - as the deliberate use of harm causing techniques which anybody can employ if they have access to them - and witchcraft - as an innate malevolent

34 Arens argues that believing cannibal accusations or assertions can blind one to the real issue, which is why people make such accusations (Arens, 1979). Similarly here the more important issue is not the existence of sorcery, but the real impact of sorcery and witchcraft *accusations*.

quality requiring no technical aids. A distinction which follows on from the work of Evans-Pritchard among the Azande (1976 [1937]), and Keith Thomas among the English historical archives (1971).

The Bila use the same method, taha, as the Lese to divine whether someone is a witch:

> Like the WaLese so also here we use taha. The WaLese and the BaBila lived together. We squabbled because each wanted one of their kind to be chief of the village: "me, it must be me!". The conflict grew and became a fight in which they attacked and stabbed each other.

It is interesting that the history of the conflict between the Bila and the Lese was conveyed in terms of external warfare when Phelix was discussing Bila relations with other groups, but here it is conveyed in terms of division within villages when spoken of in relation to witchcraft. This would appear to support the importance, and the ambivalent position, of affines for the Bila: are they insiders or outsiders?

The distinctions Bila and Mbuti tend to focus on are less between *elimba* (witchcraft) and *bumbuka* (sorcery), as between different forms of sorcery; with the possibility that someone accused of sorcery will be accused of being a 'witch' or mumba as well. This was evident when Yuma accused the absent Esidi of sorcery and wished she would die, and Bonne Anné said that then she would leave her sorcery to her daughter, Amakomba. Yet as one man put it: "you might have a mother who is a witch and yet not be one yourself, it is something some people are born with". So on the one hand they accused Esidi of being innately evil, and therefore in Anglo-Saxon terms a witch; but on the other hand they feared she would pass her abilities on to her daughter at death, which runs counter to Bila notions of witchcraft as being inborn, and is more suggestive of sorcery.

The contradictions evident here are further examples of the way in which the Bila and the Mbuti are less preoccupied with making the sharp distinction between the innate and the acquired, the internal and the external, the insider and the outsider, than the Lese. This reflects the place of affinity in Bila and Mbuti social experience; enabling them to maintain a flexible group boundary and a tendency towards inclusiveness.

Is Bila to Lese as Zafimaniry is to Merina?

A useful way of exploring the contrast between Lese and Bila beliefs is (following Barnard on regional analysis, 1992a) to compare the differences between them to similar differences between other neighbouring peoples in Africa: the Merina and the Zafimaniry. This comparison both illuminates the fundamental differences between the two groups while serving to refute the notion - inherent in Bloch's work - that the mode of production is a

determinant of social relations. On the contrary, social relations are shown to differ as a consequence of cultural understandings despite the fundamental similarity in Bila and Lese modes of production.

Whereas, for many agricultural peoples limits on the availability of land is the major limitation on production, for the Bila the forest provides as much land for agriculture as they have the labour power to clear and work. Thus the Bila rely on increasing village membership through attracting people from other villages in order to secure not only their agricultural base but also the continued existence of the village itself. In an article contrasting the Merina irrigated rice cultivators and the Zafimaniry shifting cultivators Bloch notes that the Merina "hold a view of property like our own" (1975: 205). With a system in which land not labour is invaluable, and where "all children, irrespective of sex, inherit land, every out-marriage represents a threat of potential alienation of land to outsiders" (1975: 209). For the Merina, descent and marriage is an ideology of property: one marries kinsmen to ensure the land is not alienated, and there is no term that can be translated as affines, or kinsmen-but-excluding-affines. Instead the world is divided into two categories: kinsmen-affines-neighbours, and outsiders. Slaves have formed an important part of the workforce, and tombs are an important symbol both of the continuity of the group and of the groups permanent relationship to the land it occupies.

By contrast, for the Zafimaniry swidden cultivators, for whom labour creates land by clearing the forest, an outsider joining a village may actually increase the per capita income. Thus there is not what Bloch terms "the mystification of property that we find for the Merina" (1975: 212). Instead the Zafimaniry see property relations as part of social relations, and see production as the result of - and an aspect of - interpersonal relations. For this reason the Zafimaniry system is concerned with bringing people in, where the Merina system is concerned with keeping people out. Bloch stresses that although Zafimaniry villages formally consist of patrilineal descent groups, sons often go to live at their mothers village and "are in no way inferior in status to people who are patrilineally linked with the previous generation in the village" (1975: 214). This is because marriage alliances, the creation of affinity, is far more important than descent and the retention of ownership. For the Zafimaniry there is a potential line of transformation from outsiders to neighbours to affines to kin, where for the Merina there was a clear opposition between insiders and outsiders.

Bloch's contrast, between the Zafimaniry and the Merina, mirrors the contrast between the Bila and the Lese, except in one fundamental area. Where Bloch contrasts swidden

cultivation and irrigation, and argues that the fundamental determinant of social relations is the means of production; the Bila and Lese both engage in swidden cultivation yet have opposing ways of constructing relations with outsiders, and conceptualising their relationship with the forest and the Mbuti. This implies that superstructure is not determined by infrastructure, but that ones experience of social life determines how the means of production will be represented and experienced.

Where the Lese are concerned to retain a strict boundary between insiders and outsiders (evident, for example, in relation to sorcery and witchcraft), and often view their Efe partners as slaves; the Bila are more concerned with marrying out, with bringing others into the village, and with moving between the village and the forest. All the Bila men at Utama were married to non-Bila women. Banyé, who had been married to a Lese woman, was now married to an Mbuti; Phelix was married to a Lese; Bisaili's wife at Utama was a Nande; his sister Janet was married to a Nande man at Mandimo. Bila such as Bisaili who's connection with the village was through his mother, Bamootilita, did not have an inferior status to people who were patrilineally linked with the previous generation. The term noko (meaning 'in-law') was used by Bila in relation to all those who actually or potentially might be aligned with the village through residence, marriage or long-term exchange. Thus Bila and Mbuti often address each other as noko, and even I, when walking the 20 or so miles to Epulu would be addressed as noko by other villagers because I was identified by them as being a member of the Bandicambwa, the Utama clan. The situation at Utama would appear to resemble that in Guiana where:

> descent is unimportant and the method of incorporating people into the community is by extending siblingship to them through the fiction that co-residents are consanguines (Rivière 1995: 204).

However for the Bila it is not that descent is unimportant, it is simply not as important as the real relationships that are ongoing in the present. Denis could become chief of Seti through matrilineal descent, even though the ideology is that the chiefship should be passed down through the patrilineal line. This is the heart of the matter as far as the Bila are concerned. There is an *ideology* of exclusive inequality in terms of relations between men and women, Bila and Mbuti, those of patrilineal descent and those related to their village through the matrilineal line; but there is a *reality* of inclusiveness, of valuing relationships between men and women, Bila and Mbuti, villagers and potential villagers. This means that they are closer to the Zafimaniry model, while the Lese are closer to the Merina; it also means that environmental or economic factors cannot be seen as determinants in this context, but as simply other areas in which peoples ways of relating finds expression.

Imé batoo

On the morning after the molimo held to deal with Ndengi's possession (Chapter 8), the meat drying racks were broken up and thrown into the fires before the camp set off for the village. Similarly, the rack which Ndengi had torn at when she was possessed in camp had been torn out of the ground and thrown into the fire. The purpose of this was to stop sorcerers cursing the hunting net of the person who had been using the meat drying rack. Ndengi's possession, and all the talk of sorcery in that molimo, would otherwise have left them vulnerable to abusive powers. Likewise, when the initiated boys are about to leave the nkumbi instruction camp and finally return to the village, the nkumbi house is burnt down, so as to leave batoo, nothing, and thereby make sure that the village will not be vulnerable to bad luck, to being cursed.

'Batoo' is used to describe someone who is safe from the abuses of power, either through being very powerful, or because they are not seen as powerful and so are not seen as a threat. The expression was used by Bisaili to explain why he didn't want to complain to the Chef de Collectivité (the Chief of all the Bila territory) on behalf of the Nande, Jean. Jean had complained that the Forest Reserve guards had stolen all his and Jacqui's meat when the guards had visited one of the hunting camps. He wanted Bisaili to get the Chief to complain to the reserve authorities. Bisaili explained that he did not want to annoy the Chef de Collectivité who was batoo. The Chief's perceived freedom from being troubled was seen as resulting from his power. However it later transpired that both the Chef de Collectivité and Dieu Donner were no longer willing to stay the night in this area for fear of being killed for having replaced Batomine as Chef de Groupement. Their freedom from feeling vulnerable to others power appeared to be limited.

On the other hand both Jean and Bisaili used the expression *imé batoo* (meaning either 'I am free' or 'I have nothing') to describe why they were free of responsibility and the vulnerabilities of power. In attempting to persuade Bisaili to speak up for him, Jean compared his own status as a simple farmer with Bisaili's status as the Chef de Localité for the village of Koki, saying "I am not a Chef de Localite, imé batoo" (I have nothing, and therefore am powerless). Ironically Bisaili had left Koki and settled at Utama in part to escape the endless demands and pressures of being Chef de Localite there; and his response was to say "I am a fisherman, imé batoo" (I have nothing, and therefore am free). The understanding of power conveyed in this term ranges from someone either being so

powerful that they are free, or so unimportant that they are not troubled and therefore are free.

Conflict with the Forest Reserve

In fact in relation to the newly created Forest Reserve, most people did not feel free. Bisaili complained of the elephants which had been destroying his fields at Koki, and that the reserve would not give people guns to kill or scare them off. Jacqui complained about the incident Jean mentioned when all their meat was stolen by the reserve guards, and Pati - the roughest resident of Seti - was forever in conflict with the reserve. At first Bisaili had welcomed the reserve, seeing it as a way to halt the threat posed by the intrusion of braconières into the forest, and as a way of limiting the influx of incomers. In other words he saw the reserve as being on the side of local people, and described the relationship as being like a marriage. The reserve had only recently been created, and in Bisaili's eyes it was like a marriage suitor, and needed to show its good intentions towards its bride-to-be (the local people) in order to assure the local people of it's intention to make good it's promise of marriage. If not, then the local people would see it as another man pretending to offer something of value but actually simply wanting to have something without any long-term responsibility.

At this early stage, Bisaili stood up for the good intentions of the Forest Reserve, and reported braconières to the 'station' at Epulu. This brought him into near fatal conflict with those with the guns who were profiting from killing elephants. One time, after Bisaili had called in the guards to catch braconières, Pati who had been involved in the poaching had threatened to get the braconnieres to kill Bisiali, and Bisiali responded by getting the guards who eventually arrested Pati. He later made peace with Bisaili, saying: "we are brothers of the same family." As the incidents of guards harassing local people increased, Bisaili became increasingly angry. Finally, when the guards burnt down his own fishing camp by the Ituri River (claiming it was a gold camp), he decided it was not marriage that the reserve was after, after all.

The immediate harassment by the guards was bad enough, but the prospect of the reserve forbidding the village from moving to a new site and having to remain in the same location, was something Bisaili saw as a far deeper long-term threat to their way of life. Bisaili explained that the village needed to be able to return to the site where those ancestors had lived, since "it pleases the ancestors".

However, village relocation not only pleases the ancestors, it also may be the only means of settling disputes. This is evident in a story Banyé told while he was still chief at Utama. The story describes the conflict between his great grandfather Simba, who was the chief of the Bandicambwa, and Simba's cousin Jinot, the son of Simba's aunt. The rivalry between Simba and Jinot clearly mirrored that between Banyé and Bisaili: for Bisaili was the son of Banyé's aunt and clearly wanted to be chief, despite his friendship with Banyé. In the history the clan split, with Simba's descendants staying at Utama and Jinot's moving to Bandisolo near Banana. Thus the issue was resolved not through Simba retaining his pre-eminence nor through his being usurped from his position, but through the division and movement of villages.

The story both demonstrates the importance of village relocation, and the fact that history is used as a way of talking about the present. It also demonstrates the way in which the ideology of patrilineal descent often gives way to a reality of bilineal descent, since Jinot's claim to authority rested on tracing his descent through his mother not his father. Flexibility, in terms both of village relocation and in terms of kinship and descent, plays a central part in Bila, as well as Mbuti, relations. The possibilities for new combinations of groups, whether linked primarily patrilineally or primarily matrilineally, forming themselves through establishing new villages, is an important option which both shapes the future and shapes new ways of retelling the past. The obstacle now being placed in the way of this is the policy of the Forest Reserve which aims to stop villages moving, and eventually to cause a shift from shifting cultivation to permanent methods of agriculture.

The whole history and future of the village is mapped out in it's patterns of fission and fusion expressed in the relocation of the village and the realignment of residence patterns, involving members of villages joining together to create a new village, or a village splitting into two. Over time, groups separate and rejoin, and the movement of villages every ten years or so parallels in a longer term way many of the functions performed by the regular movement of Mbuti hunting camps. The realignment enables new patterns of alliances and distances to be established both within the village, between villages, and between the living and the dead.

Case Study: Realigning allegiance

Chief Paulo's eldest son Roger had brought up his siblings while his father had been off living in gold camps. Roger was described as 'knowing how to nourish his children', and his gentleness and popularity was in stark contrast to his father, who often humiliated him in public. Roger lived at Tonani, just west of Utama, and vowed never to move to Utama

where his father lived. He explained that at some point in the future he would like to establish a new village, and many other people would clearly join in re-establishing the centre of the village around him; but such a way of resolving personal and political difficulties in the village would become impossible if the new regulations were enforced.

To understand the politics and thinking that informs such regulations, the following two chapters examine the activities and policies of the conservationists at Epulu. Where conservation tends to be built on a cosmology of exclusion, the cosmology of inclusion evident in the forest camps and also in the village - despite the attempts to assert a hierarchy of opposition and control - provides an approach to conservation which takes the acknowledgement of interdependence and inclusion as its starting point.

PART V: CONSERVATION

CHAPTER 11 CONSERVATIONISTS IN THE ITURI: Voices of hegemony or players in the local scene?

This chapter examines conservationists' cosmologies through looking at what these conservationists do: creating employment opportunities for local people, capturing and studying okapi and other forest animals, making nature films, and conducting scientific studies. What is the relationship between the conservation projects and local people, the forest, and recent incomers into the area? In what sense are they representatives of powerful Western interests and ideas, and in what sense are they embedded in, and shaped by, local social relations?

REPRESENTATIVES OF HEGEMONY OR PLAYERS IN THE LOCAL SCENE?

Western Projects at Epulu

On the 2nd of May 1992, representatives of some of the Western conservation bodies in Epulu were present in Kinshasa for the official creation of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve by the Minister of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism. With increased disturbances and the occasional killing of Europeans (in 1992 and 1993), most *wazungu* (whites) had fled Kinshasa and the rest of Zaire, and civil war seemed increasingly likely. In this context it was extraordinary that a conservation initiative in the Ituri was taking place at all.

The reserve is managed by the Institut Zairoise pour la Conservation de la Nature (IZCN), with support from the various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) present in Epulu. The NGOs involved in the creation of the reserve were: the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), which had worked for the establishment of the reserve through several successive project leaders; the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which had been present for even longer than WWF; and the Gilman Investment Company (GIC), which had been active in Epulu since 1986.

Although WWF had worked since 1986 to create the Reserve, it gradually pulled out of the Ituri during my major research period, handing over responsibility for assisting IZCN's management of the reserve to GIC and WCS. WCS was a much smaller NGO than WWF, and were expanding into Reserve management (although their main orientation was wildlife

research) not only in the Ituri but also in Cameroun; believing that more effective social research was urgently needed to make the reserves effective.

A separate project, supported by the Frankfurt Zoological Society, caught and trained rare forest animals to play parts in nature films made in the Ituri. These films were seen as vital to communicate the importance of wildlife protection to the public in the West. The importance of zoos and filmmaking to conservation here, points to an understanding of nature which involves capture, separation and observation. In examining the cosmology of conservation as embodied in the activities of the various Western scientists and conservationists in the Ituri, I will begin by looking at the work and impact of the main Western employers at Epulu: GIC and WCS.

The American couple, Teresa and John Hart, who created and managed Sozony, originally came to Zaire to work for the Peace Corps and had never really left. At the time of my research they were living with their three daughters at 'Camp Putnam' by the Epulu River where the anthropologist Patrick Putnam had lived in Turnbull's day. Just as Putnam appeared to take many interested passers-by under his wing, so the Harts employed, supported or provided assistance to many Zairian and foreign researchers, and those working for them. Observing the Zairian love of snappy acronyms, their parent organisation WCS, was known locally as Sozony, the French acronym for the New York Zoological Society. John Hart's earlier studies of the Mbuti had largely given way to: extensive studies of flora and fauna, establishing facilities for researchers, and helping to create the Forest Reserve. They conducted surveys of large areas of the forest, and of large numbers of forest mammals. They ate Zairian food, were often referred to by local people as 'Zairoise'; and John was occasionally referred to as a local Chief, on account of their 'possessing' two areas of forest where their research centres were. Certainly in his dealings with many Zairians John exhibited an amazing ability to be at home in the Zairian love of wrapping stories and events in great style, and encouraging others to do likewise. Their wide network of friendships with local people, many of whom worked for them, included many Mbuti such as members of Kengé's family who were close at hand at Camp Kengé. One of the main purposes behind Sozony's support for the Forest Reserve was as a step towards the creation of a totally protected area in the heart of the forest where vital rainforest research could continue undisturbed.

At the other end of Epulu, in the old Okapi Capture Station originally established by the Belgians, lived a Swiss couple who worked for the Gilman Investment Company, a private American organisation seeking the protection of rare or endangered species such as the

okapi. The Station had long been abandoned, and together with IZCN they had restored it to it's original role. At the time of my research they were carrying out occasional 'okapi capture campaigns' in a joint project with IZCN called Animals in Motion, and were successfully attempting to breed okapi in spacious captivity at Epulu. They provided financial and day to day support to IZCN: to the park guards who had the task of controlling 'undesirable' human activity in the reserve, and to the 'conservateur' in charge of the forest reserve. They provided overnight accommodation for overland trucks on their way through the Ituri, often having to confiscate monkeys and other 'pets' the overlanders had bought on their way through Africa. They consequently ended up with a large number of individual animals such as parrots and monkeys, as well as the okapi, all of whom they worked hard to care for.

Apart from helping with the construction and running of the local school they embarked on the establishment of an agroforestry project near the Capture Station in Epulu, to demonstrate alternative permanent agricultural techniques. In the process many and varied crops, vegetables and fruit were being grown including some - to a European palate - delicious European vegetables which they were having difficulty persuading local people to use. They were a major employer, and one of their aims in supporting the forest reserve was to secure protected areas, free from human inhabitation and activity, along certain stretches by the road where they occasionally conducted their 'okapi capture campaigns'. The main purpose behind breeding okapi in Epulu was so that some of their offspring could be sent to zoos abroad, including Gilman's own private zoo for endangered species in the USA, in order to maintain the genetic viability of the captive populations outside the okapis' only natural habitat: the Ituri Forest.

Are the Projects Disruptive to the Forest and the Mbuti?

In 1985 the population of Epulu was estimated to be around 500 villagers, with a further 150 Mbuti also living in the area (Hart & Hart 1986). Just seven years later the population of Epulu in 1992 was calculated by the Zone of Mambasa to be 3,400 people, and by WWF to be around 1,500. The Zones figures amounted to an increase of about 450 per cent; WWF's lower estimate still amounted to a population increase of well over 100 per cent. Was this increase simply due to the numbers of people moving into the Ituri in general, or was it due to the employment opportunities offered by the conservation bodies in Epulu? One way of calculating this is to compare the population increase in Epulu with that of the nearest major town, Mambasa, where the Zone of Mambasa calculated that the increase was from just over 12,000 in 1985 to just under 16,000 in 1990, an increase of about 33 per cent in five years. According to WCS the population in and around the reserve

as a whole rose to 35,000 in the two and a half years between its creation in May 1992 and November 1994. This was an increase of 12 per cent, or the equivalent of about 33 per cent over seven years (Curran pers. com.). The mathematics suggest quite strongly that the population increase in Epulu - over 100 per cent in seven years - was far higher than that elsewhere in the Ituri where the population increase would appear to be have been at a rate of about 33 per cent over the same period.

That the presence of the conservation bodies was drawing people to Epulu is born out by other factors. Prices in the small shops were higher in Epulu in comparison to Mambasa. The higher prices and the opportunity for wealth would not appear to have been the result of the presence of gold camps, since there were many more in the vicinity of Mambasa. A barman in Epulu, commenting that prices in Epulu were higher than anywhere, and that everyone in Epulu lived mainly off the conservation projects, said that "the projects are more of a goldmine than gold!"

People moving into the Ituri would appear to have been drawn to Epulu as a result of the employment and development opportunities offered by the conservation bodies. It is ironic that the very presence of the conservation initiatives may have been an increasingly major cause of forest destruction in the centre of the Ituri: as incomers who arrived to seek work created shambas to grow food. This analysis is supported by the fact that many incoming and Bila farmers moved closer to Epulu in order to be able to sell their produce to the projects. According to one missionary: many farmers were moving to be nearer to Epulu to take advantage of this situation and the fact that the conservationists "buy at a good price".

There is tremendous potential for conservation initiatives to be counter-productive in this way. In a large EC funded national park in the Congo, the total salary paid to its 110 employees was eight million CFA. Over half this total salary was spent on buying cartridges. In this situation conservation was providing a magnet which drew people into an area that would otherwise have been relatively undisturbed (pers. com. WCS conference participants, Epulu, 1993). WWF in Korup, their flagship national park in Cameroun, had provided lessons in mechanics, funding for women's co-operatives, etc., in order to create other incomes for local people. However, this was not treated as an alternative to forest destruction, instead it provided the participants with income with which to employ others to cut down the forest to make shambas, or to buy guns to lend to others to get bushmeat for them. In other words the vocational training offered to people in the buffer zone in the area around the park has simply enabled them to acquire the means to intensify their exploitation of the forest rather than shifting their economic focus elsewhere (pers. com. WCS 1993).

It seems clear that the attempt to provide development initiatives as a way of restraining human involvement in their environment can be very counter-productive.

The projects in Epulu were certainly providing employment for many people, and required large quantities of produce which was mostly transported in from Bunia by the projects, but was bought in the area by their workers. Until WWF largely pulled out of the Ituri in 1993, their educational and census gathering teams and support workers at Epulu often involved themselves in buying bushmeat and agricultural produce such as rice from the villages between Epulu and Mambasa. GIC bought in food, mostly from Bunia, for its workers and to support the park guards and other IZCN staff. During okapi capture campaigns, between thirty five and forty five local people from the nearest villages were employed by GIC to prepare the capture pits and remove the captured okapi. GIC permanently employed between eighty and ninety people in Epulu, including forty eight Mbuti men and women.

The Mbuti worked from dawn until 9am, seven days a week, every day of the year, to collect leaves to feed the captive okapis. The work relied on Mbuti forest expertise: they were the people who best knew the changing nature of the forest and who knew which leaves would be available where and when. In the honey season they managed to return with the leaves by 8am so that they could then go further into the forest to find honey for themselves. The pay the Mbuti received, in the form of cash and rations, was equivalent to 0.6 dollars a day (1.2 million Zaire's in April 1993), and this pay was probably indirectly reaching about five hundred Mbuti in and around Epulu. If the figure of approximately 150 Mbuti in and around Epulu in 1985 was correct, then this suggests that between 1985 and 1993 a large number of Mbuti moved to Epulu to be nearer this source of wealth and lived in nearby camps.

By contrast the Mbuti working at Sozony's research sites in the forest were all men, were not allowed to bring alcohol to the site, and returned to their families for four days out of every fourteen. At one of these research sites, where an American woman was relying on Mbuti workers in her research into colobus monkeys, the Mbuti worked six or seven hours a day followed by evening chores, yet it was extremely rare for any Mbuti to fail to turn up for work after their four days off. Over a seven month period, during which she regularly employed half a dozen Mbuti at her camp, only one failed to turn up for work. This suggests that the avoidance of long-term commitments is a peripheral rather than central aspect of Mbuti sociality (*contra* Morris 1982: 457).

Mbuti unpredictability in relation to fulfilling their part of the bargain with their Bila exchange partners, and the supposedly 'animal-like' inability to remember obligations from one day to the next which we have seen gold prospectors and others attribute to them, were clearly strategies adopted to suit particular circumstances. Reliability was clearly a more appropriate strategy in order to maintain continuous employment when working for these conservation bodies. This supports the argument that, beyond mobility and an assertive egalitarianism, "cultural flexibility" (Kent 1996: 13) or "a foraging mode of thought" (Barnard 1993: 33) are more central to the culture of people such as the Mbuti than any specific activity such as the avoidance of long-term commitments.

Atoka, an Mbuti man returning to follow colobus monkeys after four days at Camp Kengé at Epulu, complained that his family (meaning the whole camp) had drunk all his wages. Twice a month, on GIC's pay-day, Epulu would be swamped by drunken Mbuti using up much of their pay on alcohol. For this reason GIC started to pay half their wages in the form of rations - oil, salt, rice, beans, and soap - in order for pay to benefit their families rather than simply be drunk. However the greater proportion of these rations continued to simply be exchanged for alcohol. Thus although the Mbuti who worked for the projects were reliable workers, once pay day arrived they got rid of their money fast. One of the major reasons for this was that if they did not spend it, the money would be demanded of them as it was of Atoka by his family. Working for conservationists may have been different to net hunting, but demand sharing was still a far more powerful value than the right to retain excess possessions.

Woodburn states that "stable relationships spell out domination and dependence to the Hadza and they avoid them" (1988: 53) This begs the question as to whether the employment opportunities available to Mbuti gathering leaves to feed the okapi in the capture station, or working on Sozony's research projects strengthened or disrupted Mbuti culture and their relationship with the forest? An increase in wealth that is so quickly converted into alcohol or tobacco can clearly be disruptive to any community. The persistence of demand sharing meant that the individual is more interested in quickly consuming their pay, rather than attempting to retain it to use over time and so in all likelihood lose it to others. In acquiring a reliable source of money, they had not acquired a belief in the individuals' economic independence and his or her right to accumulate and possess.

The projects were employing Mbuti largely in order to benefit from their forest skills: finding and following troupes of colobus monkeys; helping capture okapis for the capture

station, and gathering the appropriate leaves to feed them with; or conducting net hunts in which okapi or duiker were caught in the nets, radio tagged and released by Sozony in order to be able to study their movement through the forest. Employing their skills in this way clearly need not threaten their abilities, nor their identification with the forest, in the way that the use of Baka skills to identify the best trees for logging companies has helped lead to the devastation of their forest. However the difference is not simply in the nature and purpose of the work, but in the context of that work.

In contrast to the missionary and development agency efforts to turn the Baka into farmers in Cameroun; Western conservation bodies working to protect the Ituri Forest, sought to support rather than undermine the sustainable nature of traditional Mbuti hunting and gathering. At the same time they gave their workers access to free medical treatment, the possibility of schooling and of acquiring money in ways that were not necessarily destructive to their forest. Meanwhile rituals such as the molimo and the nkumbi continued to play an important part in peoples' lives. The nkumbi celebrations in the villages close to Epulu were as intense as anywhere else in the forest and Mbuti in the camps here appeared to be more conscious of their culture and more ready to initiate and sustain long festivals than others. This was perhaps as a way of coping with the potential threat posed by the transition to permanent work and regular pay, and also perhaps partly a reflection of the evident value being placed on their culture by Western incomers. Here, the amount of money thrown at the dancers on pay-day would be totally disproportionate to the amount thrown at other times and places. Those who had just been paid would be throwing 500,000 zaire notes instead of the usual 50,000 zaire notes, without any more regard for what the money might be worth than they had when acquiring alcohol on pay-day.

Filming and the Honey Dance

Whereas participation in paid employment at the projects did not appear to disrupt core rituals, my only experience of an Mbuti ritual being severely disrupted by one of the projects was when a honey dance I had been present at since early morning was joined by a filmmaker in the evening. Soon after the camera had been set up in the midst of the dancing in the middle of the camp; the enthusiastic and chaotic drumming and dancing that had been going on since dawn soon disintegrated into fighting and hostility among those who had been the most enthusiastic participants. One distraught woman claimed she was terribly ill and insisted on being transported immediately to Epulu in the projects vehicle: the dance was soon over. But whether this really was the disruption of local peoples' lives by outsiders which it appeared to be, or whether the Mbuti used the filmmaker's presence as an excuse to bring the dancing to an end is unclear. Other dances often end in fighting; and

according to Turnbull the honey dance "is often followed by a good-natured fight which may develop into the tug of war" (1965: 172). Although the fighting at the end of this honey dance could in no way be described as good-natured, it is quite possible that Turnbull was overstating the friendliness of the fights he witnessed at the end of honey dances, just as - over the years - he came to overstate the friendliness involved in the tugs of war themselves. His description of tugs of war that involved rough fighting and the "collapse of one side or the other" (1965: 171) later turned into a good-natured story in which the tug of war involves the affirmation of equality between the sexes in which "[n]either side wins"(1983: 47).

What is more remarkable than the impact of the filmmaker's presence (or the use to which his presence was put), is the fact that as those Mbuti who had been collecting leaves for the okapi finished work and came to join us, they would take off their T-shirts, replacing their western garb with colourful loincloths, and would become as engrossed in the drumming and dancing as anyone else (see Silberbauer 1996, and Bird-David on Silberbauer 1996: 301). When I asked whether I could take photographs I was told that I was welcome to watch and to dance but not welcome to take photographs: clearly they did not want this dance, which would aid the search for honey, to be disrupted. I witnessed this honey dance during one of my earliest brief visits to the Ituri, before I knew anybody, and it seemed remarkable to me that these people, who in Epulu would always come up to white people like myself and ask for cigarettes, or demand to be photographed in exchange for money, could suddenly step into a completely different state right at the edge of the road, and refuse the presence of the photographic eye at all. It seemed quite clear that such a major celebration as this socialising that precedes the dispersal of the camps in the search for honey, had no more been disrupted by individual Mbuti taking on paid employment at the projects than had the search for honey itself, which simply required the leaf collectors to finish their job sooner to make the most of a day in the forest searching for that most precious item of all.

During the dance the men moved in single file, snaking their way through one side of the camp and the nearby undergrowth, as if on paths through the forest searching for honey. Whenever they approached the ragged line of women singing and dancing in front of the huts on the other side of the clearing, a mock battle would commence in which the women were bees chasing the men away from the huts that were the hives full of honey. The drumming continued endlessly from the *barazza* in the centre of the camp. Although important, there is a danger in placing identification with the forest at the heart of such

hunter-gatherer's identity, if it obscures their long standing ability to deal with other pressures without necessarily losing their cultural centre of gravity.

This was evident, for example, in a beautiful film of the Baka made by Philip Agland for Channel 4. In this film he presents the Baka in the same way that wildlife films present rare species. Much of the surrounding story, and the interaction between the film maker and the object of the film, has to be cut out in order to present a convincing picture that this is the people isolated in their natural habitat, undisturbed by the outside world. In the Ituri film which included clips of the Mbuti honey dance, the dance is presented as if happening because of the absence of modernity, rather than as part of the ongoing interplay of innovation and continuity which shapes all social life everywhere.

Films of the Baka and the Mbuti often assume that isolation is the key to the continuation of their cultures. However, the strength of Mbuti culture is evident not only in the identification with the forest that is at its heart - in the form of hunting, singing and rituals such as this honey dance - but is also evident in an ability to move in and out of divergent social contexts (Kent 1996: 13-14): searching for honey, net hunting, working village fields, searching for gold, 'begging' from tourists, working as wage earners, and dancing the honey dance. Where the forest is being destroyed and long term relations with villagers are being replaced by short term economic relations with incomers, as is the case at Mandimo, then this movement is in danger of being frozen. The movement itself, rather than some notion of such people living in isolation, would seem to be as central to their identity as their ability in, and identification with, the forest.

Western Representation of Nature through Film and Controlled Research

The hushed voice-over commentary accompanying the film of the Baka moving through their forest world, is the same hushed voice that accompanies filming of rare and exotic animals in wildlife films. The filmmakers are rarely seen in the film in any form of interaction with the 'exotic' people or species they are filming.

This is peculiar, considering the amount of negotiation or domination required to create such films. At Epulu, after the animals have been caught, they are taught to play a part according to a script devised by the film maker. The final film is assumed by the public to be a genuine *reflection* of nature when in fact it is a genuine *projection* of our assumptions about nature. In one case a large glass tank of water with a 'natural' backdrop was constructed in the grounds of the film-maker's house. Chemicals had to be put in the water in order to make it clear so the water chevrotain (antelope) could be filmed through one of

the tanks windows as it walked under water on the bottom of the 'natural stream' like a hippo, coming up slowly to the surface to breath. It was filmed with a filter over the lens which transformed the daylight into moonlight, making the scene less distinct and even more exotic.

A similarly script was created for the rare and nocturnal ozmonyctus or water civet. The man who had caught it proudly claiming that he was the first white man to see and catch one: a claim that had echoes of Linden's writing about the 'virgin forest' in northern Congo: a place 'innocent of humans' just as the ozmonyctus had been innocent of the white man and his purposes. The water civet was trained to come out of its small hut that was within a much larger cage, and walk down a log to a man made 'natural' pool with a 'natural' backdrop. This meant that it could be filmed to look as though it was walking down to a pool in the forest in the moonlight. The way such films are constructed suggests that they may have less to do with the animals lived experience and more to do with confirming our pre-existing cultural notions of the natural world and what it means to be an animal.

After being filmed the habituated animals are returned to the wild, where they are vulnerable to predators. Animals that are caught for research purposes can reach an untimely end even faster. In a capture campaign, conducted not by GIC but by researchers intent on putting radio collars on the animals in order to release them back into the wild and then track their movements, fourteen okapi died; either when falling into the capture pits, or because leopards reached the pits first. Similarly duiker, when radio collared for research purposes, are less able to slip through tiny gaps in the undergrowth and are therefore much more vulnerable to predators. However they were not as vulnerable as some animals can be during enforced captivity.

During research into food preferences eight out of the fourteen captured duiker died. Most died from bashing themselves against their pens in an attempt to escape, and some may have died through being unable to eat and so starving themselves to death. The research had to be conducted in this way because the researcher only had two months to collect her data; but it seems unlikely that this highly controlled method could arrive at any idea of ordinary food preference in duiker by using tests in which the animals were driven crazy by fear.

Clearly, in scientific research as in nature films, the method used can mean that we confirm our assumptions rather than arrive at a clearer picture of reality. A very different illustration

of this was given by Marina Warner when she described scientific data about the praying mantis. Two scientists had:

> videotaped the mantises' courtship while the insects thought they were in private and found a pleasant ritual dance in place of cannibalism - and with both partners surviving. The researchers say that until now scientists have distracted the insects by their presence and by watching them under bright lights - and that they didn't give them enough to eat. (Warner 1994: 16)

An Alternative Approach: Research with Colubus Monkeys

The approach to scientific research taken by the American who was studying colobus monkeys in their natural habitat in the wild, was similar to the approach of these two scientists, if somewhat more demanding. The scientific study of colobus monkeys in the wild involved winning their trust while they remained at liberty, and following them to learn from them. Scientific study is often presented as necessarily involving detachment and control, however Wolf has suggested simply that "science is . . . achieved to the extent that the evidence is presented in a way that permits confirmation or disconfirmation" (Wolf 1964: 88). Since the colubus study eschewed the construction element involved in the film making, and the controlled isolation element often involved in scientific research, it suggests a scientific model appropriate to the open ended research required for the construction of successful conservation initiatives. One in which the observer and the observed are in some fundamental sense equals. Whereas the filmed animals are tame by the time they are released back into the wild and are vulnerable to both human and other animal hunters; the habituation in the colubus study leaves the monkeys only temporarily vulnerable to human but not animal predators - and without the incapacitation or deaths involved in captive or laboratory experiments.

Case Study: The scientific observer as participant

The research camp was in the middle of the forest, in an area in which two different colobus groups lived. Every morning Carolyne and her Mbuti guide Atoka would set out before dawn to reach the place where they had left the group settling down to sleep high in the branches of the trees the night before. They had to arrive before the monkeys set off through the canopy, and keep them in sight throughout the day, observing their behaviour, and in no way frightening them or they would lose the group. In fact they would often lose the group anyway, and Carolyne had so far managed to collect only three months worth of data from seven months in the field; mostly because the Mbuti she left behind to keep track of the group during her brief visits to Epulu, would lose them.

Over time the monkeys became more or less habituated, although they still set the pace and the researchers had to work very hard to keep up. Being habituated meant that they were

less afraid of humans, but they were far more afraid of the other members of her research team than they were of Carolyne and Atoka. This was perhaps partly why the groups would not stay in contact when Carolyne and Atoka took time off in Epulu leaving the others to keep track of the colobus. When she found them again, after having lost track of them for two weeks, they were at first frightened of her, which reassured her that it would not take them long to regain their avoidance of humans after she finished her research.

The Zairian Conservateur in charge of the reserve couldn't understand why she didn't just catch them and radio collar them. Another conservationist asked why she didn't spray paint individual colobus in order to be able to make it easier to identify the different individuals as they moved about high in the canopy overhead. "But that would ruin the habituation achieved" said Carolyne; meaning that it would destroy the trust she and Atoka had gradually built up with the different individuals and groups: a relationship into which the humans entered as equals.

It had been during her attempt to help colubus monkeys in America to become sociable again - after they had become deranged through being experimented on - that Carolyne had decided to study them in the wild. Once, in the forest, when a colobus male had come down to within eighteen feet of her and had watched her for a long time, looking at it she had suddenly felt she was looking into the face of one of the caged monkeys she had been trying to help in America. Having been experimented on they would never be free of their cages, never have the choice of contact, indifference or flight that this male had. In a review of a book by Linden on the fate of the chimpanzees that had taken part in language experiments, Ursula le Guin comments that:

> these days the Centres for Disease Control can announce without excuse or comment that chimpanzees have been 'successfully infected' with AIDS. From the point of view of these researchers the success is complete. Older laboratory animals, having been subjected to previous experiments (even if the experiments were intellectual not medical), are less valuable, hence appropriate for use in 'terminal studies'. (1992: 295)

The monkeys in America that Carolyne had worked with, had been isolated and used for laboratory experiments. The scientists there claimed that the monkeys would kill each other if they were put into the same cage together: that they were so totally anti-social and deranged by the experiments they had been put through, that they might as well carry on being the subject of experiments. Instead Carolyne grouped the monkeys' separate cages closer together and rewarded them every time they touched a red square. After a while she moved the squares until they could all touch the same one; and then so that they could touch each other; until finally they started grooming each other. The desocialisation process they had been through was not, after all, irreversible.

Conclusion: The Cosmology of Western Conservation Bodies in Practice

Most of the conservation bodies working in the Ituri have strong connections with zoos; and just as one could consider wildlife films to be reflecting back to us our construction of nature, so zoos could be argued to be an embodiment of both the control we exert over the natural world and also the tendency to take a part of the whole out of context in order to use it or to understand it.

In a sense nature is being produced in the Ituri in order to be consumed in the West: whether it be in the form of research results in academic journals, films on television, okapi in zoos, or material for WWF fund-raising campaigns. Clearly all these activities also have the potential to be beneficial to the Ituri and its inhabitants. Apart from immediate opportunities for employment, healthcare and education for local people; they can provide reasons for the public in the West to support those working to halt the timber laden juggernaut of powerful Western commercial interests.

However consumption may not be a particularly resilient basis for conservation: since consuming images of the 'other' (whether it be wild nature or 'exotic' people) works from the same basis as the extraction and consumption of raw materials. The Cartesian notion of the mind as separate from the material world, and humans as separate from nature, pervades much of the approach to research, filmmaking and conservation this chapter has been describing. Within this world view, capturing okapis in order to be able to take some of their offspring to zoos in America to protect the blood line there and so ensure "the genetic viability of captive populations" (Stephenson 1994: 5) makes sense. In this context the potential threat of Western commercial interests to the okapis' only natural habitat makes the task even more vital and urgent. Yet this way of approaching the problem is only made possible by considering that each part is separable and distinct: that conserving an okapi out of the context of its natural habitat is a possible way of approaching conservation. It is this very way of thinking which enables Western companies to make the profits necessary to cover the cost of extracting okapi from Zaire; and it is the same reductionist way of thinking that causes such companies to invest in logging and the destruction of Central African rainforests as a way of making their large profits.

In a situation that has many parallels with this approach to conservation, Colchester describes the work of those involved in the Human Genome Project:

> Working on the assumption that endangered peoples are vanishing from the face of the earth, these scientists . . . collect samples of their DNA for cold storage and study. . . . [They] feel justified in collecting human samples in the name of human welfare, while doing nothing to counter the forces that are driving these people to extinction. Underlying these priorities are unrecognized prejudices that consider indigenous

> peoples to be . . . doomed to disappear once the modern world catches up with them (1994: 55).

When conservation attempts to rescue a species or an area by putting a wall around it then it simply redirects energy towards dealing with symptoms and away from tackling causes. From this reductionist standpoint it is easy for the conservationist or scientist to believe s/he is standing objectively outside the situation making rational judgements about how best to proceed, rather than recognising that her decisions and actions are an integral part of the situation. Being a representative of an international conservation body, or an anthropologist, can mean believing oneself to be an innocent party intervening to sort out the mess others have created; rather than recognising that the belief system through which one is interpreting the situation may itself be the fundamental cause of the destruction one is witnessing.

CHAPTER 12 REPRESENTING ANCESTORS: Reconciling local & conservationists cosmologies

The chapter considers the responses of local people to the Forest Reserve and to the plans for the reserve; and the possibility of reconciling the cosmologies of conservationists and local people.

LOCAL PEOPLES' RESPONSES TO THE FOREST RESERVE

A group of travelling players from Kisangani performed a play at Epulu about the destruction of the forest, a performance which amused and unsettled everybody watching:

Case Study: Eco-play, the forest dancing to a ghettoblaster

The play opens at night - to the sound of music blasting out from a ghettoblaster - with the central character, the forest itself, walking on stage looking anxiously around and asking if there are humans about. There are none, so he calls all his friends - the creatures of the forest - and they have a wild party. Following this there is a fast-moving enactment of the many ways in which people are destroying the forest, and the claim that we are all at fault. The play ends with the forest burning and writhing, it's last judgement being that all of us miserable sinners are too busy looking for diamonds the size of a head, looking for women, cutting down the forest - to notice we were also destroying the planet.

The audience consisted of local people who had all been dependent at some time or other on working for the forest reserve, on growing crops, on searching for gold or selling produce to those engaged in the search. The play elicited hysterical laughter as a man fought with his shadow, and much fun was made of a fat greedy president. There was a more muted response to the enactment of riots in Kinshasa which had resulted from fuelwood shortages, and to the claim that the forest is valuable even without its diamonds and gold. There was a similar response to a dialogue between a loud voice claiming that "If we don't cut down the forest to grow crops we'll die" and a quite voice saying "If we do cut it we'll die". But the claim that white technical experts, who say they have come to help but actually just destroy the forest, was enthusiastically received.

One of the players in this group, Robert, later returned to Epulu and secured a job running the research centre for Sozony. Since Sozony is essentially a research organisation working on university projects it could cope with this Zairian intellectual's critical mind.

He argued that "conservation is just serving the rich and the rich countries, and limiting the opportunities of the poor". Robert complained that: "the West has caused the problem and now tells the Third World what it can and can't do. It is the poor who have to bear the burden."

Where Sozony focused on intellectual research, those running GIC and the Okapi Capture Station were more concerned with management. They sought effective protection for the okapi and the forest in general, while attempting to make sure that their many workers and the reserve guards were well treated and well managed - a difficult task in the chaotic and kleptocratic politics of Zaire. Their Zairian co-director, Jean Nlamba, saw the situation very differently to Robert. He argued that "the Okapi reserve is an attempt to not penalise the poor while protecting nature". Jean had a difficult job attempting to put into practise Western NGO theories about consulting the local population and seeking to link conservation to meeting their needs.

Once he asked the local chiefs and Umatatu, the Chef de Groupement, what they would like for their people from GIC, which wanted to dig pits to capture an okapi. The chiefs and Umatatu answered "bicycles and corrugated iron roofs for all the chiefs". Jean said "no, it must be something for all the people, choose between dispensaries, schools and offices". In the end nothing came of it but three bicycles, one for Umatatu and one for the village chief on either side of the area along the roadside where the capture took place.

Jean's stance, far from being seen as the actions of a man seeking to benefit the whole population rather than just the few chiefs, was seen by some people as displaying a lack of respect for the chiefs. Most argued this on the basis that an enriched chief was more able to benefit his followers. This highlights Mosse's point that present theories of development participation give

> little recognition to the fact that material interests are inseparable from social relationships, and that choices are mediated by social institutions involving shared assumptions about such things as justice, fairness and reciprocity (Mosse 1995: 155, see also Spencer 1990: 98)

Interestingly incomers, such as the Nande farmer Venance, described Umatatu's neighbouring chef de groupement, Dieu Donner, as doing a good job precisely because he was efficient at extracting wealth from his inferiors and paying his superiors, a process he described with the French expression "il lave le barbe de vie". Local peoples support for Umatatu rested on very different foundations to Venance's support for Dieu Donner, but neither shared the NGOs interpretations of 'justice, fairness and reciprocity'.

By contrast, Nziwa at Tobola complained that the population did not benefit from conservation at all:

> They tell us an okapi is very valuable, but what value is it to us to have the okapi protected when our fields are destroyed by elephants, and we lack schools and hospitals, dispensaries and passable roads?

People generally alternate between seeing the reserve as an opportunity and seeing it as a threat. Bisaili summed up this attitude when he described the relationship between the reserve and the population as being "like a marriage". If handled well it could work to everybodies advantage, if handled badly it could lead to disaster. He added that the reserve should be generous to the population "just as when a Bila man arrives in an Mbuti hunting camp he will give out tobacco and other things as a sign of his good intentions". Commenting on how the relationship had turned out, he continued:

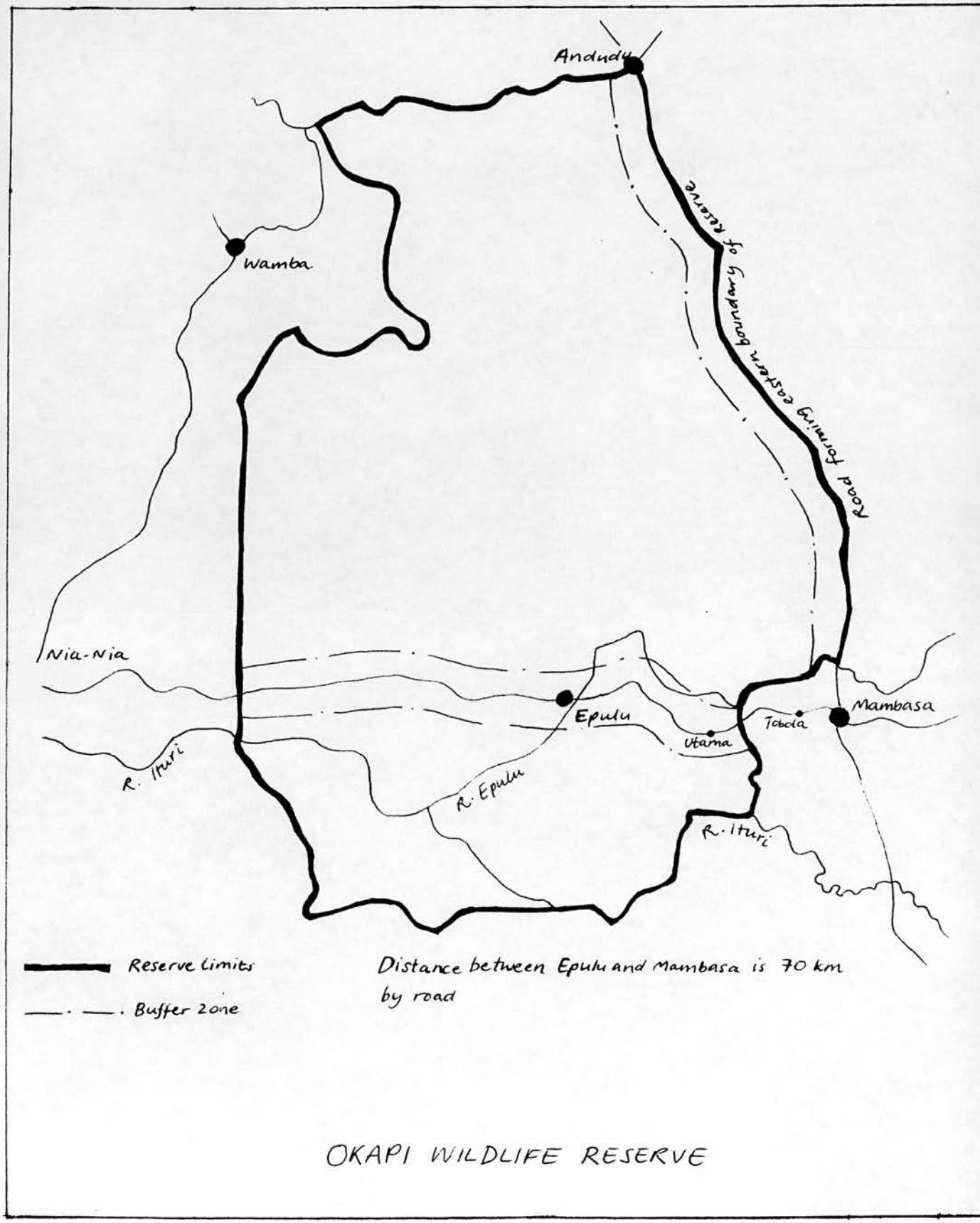
> But instead the station has done nothing. The guards simply harass anyone they meet who carries meat, and we are forbidden from moving the village. If we kill an okapi we are arrested and fined. Chief Umatatu has told us: "If an okapi falls into a pit and dies during a capture campaign, the station must pay the population because the okapi is ours, it is our forest".

Like Nziwa, Bisaili and many others complained about being forbidden to killing animals which were destroying their crops. Most people feared the braconières who were believed to have been armed by the Zone authorities at Mambasa, and who moved through the forest killing elephants for their tusks. South of Utama the whole forest had been full of braconières up until two years earlier, and Banyé explained that:

> They might rob anyone in the forest, or take and rape your women. At that time it was like the second Simba. . . Then two years ago the commandos were sent from Kisangani. They entered the forest [and] came upriver on the Ituri. They shot and killed the braconières. They too were dangerous and might steal or kill or rape. It lasted for weeks. Since then there have been few braconières in the forest.

While welcoming the possibility that the reserve might put an end to the threat from, local people such as Banyé tended to view the reserve guards as posing a similar threat. The fundamental question appeared to be whether the reserve authorities were going to help secure local peoples' livelihoods by reducing the threat from braconières and reducing immigration into the area, or whether they were simply another outside force intent on disrupting local peoples livelihoods. At one level the Zairian guards might use their power to appropriate meat and other produce from the population, while, at the larger level, locals feared that the Western conservation bodies sought to take the forest itself from them.

Fig. 11. The Okapi Wildlife Reserve



FOREST RESERVE MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

First Proposals

The emphasis in the first draft of the management plan (Blom, WWF, 1992) was on excluding people from a large area of the reserve, and controlling their activities in the buffer zones surrounding the reserve. This would have involved the forced removal of dwellings from the west to the east side of the Nduye road that forms the eastern border of the reserve north of Mambasa, so that nobody would live in the protected area itself. Clearly this expression of the old exclusion and control approach to conservation would have caused very real conflict, and destroyed any possible support for the reserve; especially after a Lese meat trader was killed by reserve guards and the Chief there told the people to take up their spears if the guards returned.

The draft management plan also stated that park guards should be brought in from elsewhere. However, as we have seen, employing guards as external agents to enforce park policy, simply creates an alien body which can benefit from hunting animals with their firearms and harasses the population. Combining this policy with the proposal to restrict the Mbuti hunting range to only one day's walk from the road, and to restrict villagers' economic activity to a buffer zone only 5 kilometres on either side of the road, would have led to the complete alienation of the local population.

The Mbuti near Utama regularly hunt two days walk or more from the road; and most villagers base their economy on transporting garden produce far into the forest to Mbuti hunting camps to exchange for bushmeat. The only likely consequence of restricting forest access is that it would give the 'authorities' (park guards, gendarmes from Mambasa, and the Chef de Groupement) even more opportunities to extract wealth from the population. Bisaili pointed out that:

> it is the same authorities who lend their guns for poaching, who will come down heaviest on excluding people from the forest.

If the regulation was enforced in a rational (rather than capricious) manner, the consequences would be even more destructive. Instead of the fluid movement between forest and road, Turnbull's structured opposition - between villagers who fear the forest and Mbuti who belong to it - would become a reality. Clearly the plan ignores the extent of Mbuti/Bila interdependence, and is based on the false premise that it is local people who are the ones responsible for the destruction of the forest and therefore it is they who need to be controlled and excluded. In fact, as a WWF report on Gabon noted, in comparing the

self-provisioning of local communities with the trade in wildlife products practised by outsiders:

> subsistence hunting by small rural communities has a limited impact, [while] professional hunters who provide meat for larger towns can decimate the fauna of a particular area in a short time. (McShane-Caluzi et all 1992: 28, cited in Colchester 1993: 215)

In attempting to enforce WWF's proposed regulations, the park would have had to increasingly rely on paramilitary force - and such force is the very thing that is destroying wildlife and disrupting livelihoods in the Ituri at the moment. Rather than building extra guard posts, imposing movement restrictions, and relocating villages as this management plan proposed; it would make more sense to support existing sustainable ways of using the forest, and thereby gain the confidence of the population.

Modifying the earlier proposal

The modified version of the original WWF management plan (Curran 1992) sought instead to treat the Bila and Mbuti equally by offering them development opportunities in exchange for restricting their access to the forest. The modified plan is to protect a smaller area in the heart of the forest from all involvement by local people thereby creating an undisturbed area for protection and research. 'Zone vert' would be created in areas along the roadside where no subsistence activity would be permitted but 'capture campaigns' by GIC and others could take place. Buffer zones, their size determined through negotiation with villagers, would be created around existing villages along the road where farming and subsistence hunting would be permitted. Local people would benefit through this halting the influx of immigrant farmers, and through small scale economic development initiatives which would be offered in exchange for the loss of access to both the deep forest and the 'zone vert'.

Both GIC and WCS saw the earlier WWF proposals as alienating the local population. WCS, with a focus on rainforest research, sought exclusion of people from the biologically richest core area in the centre of the forest, and were happy to compensate local people with development opportunities in the buffer zones. GIC saw the exclusion of local people from a core area as completely unfair unless it was something which local people themselves wanted, and which would also exclude scientific researchers and tourists. GIC's focus was on the occasional capturing of okapis in stretches of forest near to the road in order to transport the okapi by truck to Epulu. For GIC, the need was to make sure that villages remained in their present locations so that they could be sure of maintaining stretches of intact forest ('zone vert') along the side of the road. Local people saw the proposals to stop villages relocating as a fundamental threat.

The assumption that conservation can only be based on restraining, rather than deepening, human involvement in the environment is evident in all three NGOs proposals. An assumption grounded in the Cartesian split between the human mind and the rest of the natural world, an assumption that we are essentially separate from, rather than a part of, our environment.

John Hart argued that at present the Ituri Forest is not being destroyed; and that with limited appetites and limited technology local economic activity is sustainable. Politically and culturally induced insatiable appetites for ever more resources would, however, be unsustainable. He believed that if stability came to Zaire then the forest would be opened up to large scale extraction by European companies who would devastate the Ituri just as they have the Baka area around Lobeke in south-eastern Cameroun. "The only things separating Lobeke and here is space and time, and those are relative" he concluded.

Thus the need is not to impose conservation regulations on the Ituri's inhabitants, but to establish a status for the Ituri Forest whereby its inhabitants (flora, fauna and human) can be protected from the ravages of present and potential external pressures. In this context: villagers, Mbuti, and those immigrants who choose to stay, would be able to deepen or continue their economic and cosmological involvement with the forest. The WaNgwana (the outsiders of Turnbull's day) are in many ways now integrated into forest culture, as is evident in their participation in the nkumbi.

"If development is to be sustainable, planning will have to begin with the people who know most about their own livelihood systems. It will have to value and develop their knowledge and skills, and put into their hands the means to achieve self-reliant development" (Pretty & Scoones 1995: 157). Although this may appear self-evident, it runs counter to mainstream development practice which "has long been dominated by the positivist paradigm, in which we seek to discover the true nature of reality to predict and control natural phenomenon" (ibid)[35]. Although usefully intending to return power to local people, Pretty and Scoones nevertheless assume a development paradigm in which these people need their knowledge and skills developed, they need to "achieve" development. This paradigm has the danger of working like a Trojan horse. While seeking to improve peoples living standards, its effect may well be the creation of what John Hart described (above) as a "politically and culturally induced insatiable appetite for ever more resources". The danger here is that development unwittingly continues the colonial attempt to "create

35 Chambers describes this as an approach "which seeks and values controlled conditions and universal truths" (1995: 33, see also Chambers 1993, chapters 1 & 6).

needs among the natives", rather than works to protect local people from the impact of external extractive forces. Pretty and Scoones opening sentence might more appropriately replace the word 'despite' with 'because of':

> Despite decades of development effort, the number of people subject to extreme poverty is increasing. Many are now faced with accelerating environmental degradation (1995: 157).

Implications for Reserve Policy

The early WWF proposals followed Turnbull's work in effectively placing the Mbuti on the nature side of the line conservation attempts to draw between humans and nature. Bailey's assertion, that hunter-gatherers here are nutritionally dependent on farmers, influenced the revised plan which treated both Bila and Mbuti as ultimately dependent on cutting down the forest to grow agricultural produce to survive. However at Utama the Bila are equally dependant on the Mbuti: to cultivate and guard their shambas, to procure meat for the village, and so that the central rituals can happen at all. Both are intensely aware of depending on the forest, and both express that dependence in terms of the forest/ancestor complex.

Hart's analysis of the Mbuti transition from traditional subsistence to commercial hunting (1978), was another major influence on the revised plan. Nande in the southern Ituri had replaced long-term Bila-Mbuti exchange with their short-term meat extracting for distant towns. The position of the Mbuti became as precarious as we have seen it to be in those areas on the fringe of the forest, such as Mandimo. However in the central Ituri the Bila's traditional connections mean they control the extraction of meat, which is primarily to meet the subsistence needs of the village. Only Nande who enter into those traditional relations (e.g. through marriage) stand much chance of acquiring meat. Here hunting occurs within a web of social, cosmological and economic relations. For this reason it is potentially a sustainable activity, in a way in which the market hunting in the southern Ituri clearly was not.

Peterson's research suggested that the major cause of Nande immigration was an increasing lack of land in Kivu, and the possibility of acquiring land in the Ituri for next to nothing. At Mandimo, many people who had claimed their interest in being in the Ituri was primarily the availability of land for agriculture, turned out to be primarily motivated to create large shambas in order to exchange their produce for gold. Thus, though Peterson is right to describing the lack of fair land distribution in Kivu as forcing people to move from their villages, it is important not to underestimate the part played by the lure of gold in attracting those emigrants to the Ituri in particular.

The implications of my research is that the social problems facing the reserve may be far more open to creative solutions. For the the Nande are more pulled by choice than pushed into the Ituri lacking any alternative, and the relationship between the Mbuti, Bila and forest are essentially far more interdependent and sustainable than has been assumed from earlier research. But how can one distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable activity?

If an economic activity is primarily motivated by external extractive forces, then it will not bear the long-term interests of the locality in mind. In the context of such forces, the usefulness of creating a forest reserve is evident, if it has the power to resist poaching and disruption by agents of the state, to resist the establishment of gold panning, and to forestall possible logging. If, on the other hand, economic activity is primarily motivated by the attempt to meet local needs then, as we have already seen, it is likely to be sustainable since it is conducted within a web of local social relations, beliefs and practices. A situation in which immediate self interest can potentially be aligned to the longer term self interest of generations.

Realigning Conservation with the Forest/Ancestors

In the conservation world this aligning with the long term tends to be expressed in terms of future generations: "the need to protect this priceless heritage for future generations", or fear for our children's future. The Bila tend to express the same belief in terms of past generations: the need to not offend the ancestors. Ultimately there is perhaps little difference between these two cosmologies: both move towards including the long-term in their immediate actions, whether conceptualised as the future in the present or as the past in the present.

There is strong support for the reserve among local people when it is seen to be on their side against the disruption caused by braconières, and by the large numbers of outsiders moving into the area. In this negative sense the reserve can build on local peoples' sense of belonging, but only if they feel that they are being treated with respect. If they are harassed then they experience the reserve not as an ally, but as yet another intruder - along with the braconières and other outsiders - seeking to make short-term advantage out of long-term disruption to the forest and its people.

One example of this difficulty was when Bisaili reported braconières to the reserve because he believed that the reserve was working with local peoples interests in mind. When the guards came to remove the braconières they also burnt down his fishing base by the Ituri

River. He quickly changed from seeing the reserve as an ally to seeing it as an intruder, and said that:

> Since the people of the station [the conservationists at Epulu] have taken our forest, instead of receiving the good things of the forest we receive suffering. You get an antelope with the intention of selling it. The guards find you and rob you immediately. Now . . . we receive nothing - why? When will we again receive the good things of the forest?

In the positive sense, the reserve can build on local peoples identification with the forest by discarding Turnbull's opposition between the peaceful Mbuti and the fearful Bila; and discarding the alternative assumption that both Mbuti and Bila are using the forest unsustainably. Instead, conservation could support their interdependence, their sustainable use of resources, and their respect for the ancestors who inhabit the forest.

For this alignment of conservation with the long-term interests and beliefs of local people, some fundamental policy changes would be necessary. One of the most basic being allowing villages to return to previous sites to benefit from rejuvenated fields, to realign residence patterns and resolve conflicts, and to 'rejoice the ancestors'. This would be an important indication to local people that the reserve is on their side, and on the side of past and future generations. It would encourage them - as it originally encouraged Bisaili - to align themselves with the forest and the reserve in order to be able to deal with the real problem which is the impact of external extractive forces.[36]

The reserve could also move towards aligning itself with the forest/ancestors by refraining from creating the total exclusion area in the heart of the forest. The exclusion area in the heart of the forest would be one into which only researchers and tourists could go; excluding all local people, except hunter-gatherers who would be allowed the privileged aloof position of the tourist or researcher. However, hunter-gatherers would only be allowed in this core area as long as they were not hunting and gathering - in other words as long a they were not engaging in their relationship with the forest. For it is through:

> a direct engagement with the constituents of the environment, not through a detached hands-off approach, that hunters and gatherers look after it (Ingold 1994b: 11).

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36 Much of this chapter was given to the conservateur before I left the Ituri in 1995, and it was also translated for village and Mbuti informants at Utama so that they could hear the conclusions I had drawn from living with them. Michael Carrithers has written that there is "a dawning realization among anthropologists that what they write is likely to be read by those whom they study" (1992:181); and he speculates that for the subjects of the ethnography "ethnographic knowledge can only seem one voice in the continuing conversation of their society" (1992:181). However, although it may simply be a passing comment in their conversations, it can also represent both the power outsiders have to decide their future, and possibly the chance to address the powerful through the circuitous route of gossip, anecdote, opinion and anger, written up as fieldwork.

The proposal to create such a core area of 'protection' is, by contrast, grounded in a belief that our relationship with such an environment needs to be restrained and mediated through the camera lens, or through the 'objective' research of natural scientists who's premise of objectivity assumes an observer status which rarely acknowledges participation in the process it is attempting to understand.

Isolating the core area of the forest from other human interventions makes sense in a reductionist picture of the world in which phenomena need to be isolated in order to be protected or understood. But understanding a phenomenon in it's broader context enables a clearer understanding of the phenomenon as embedded in a dynamic network of relationships. For this understanding to be less of a projection of the observers predicament onto the phenomenon - as is evident, for example, in nature films, research into duiker eating preferences, and many attempts to understand hunter-gatherer economies, rituals or ways of relating to their environment - the paradoxical requirement is for the person who is seeking to understand the phenomenon to stop being simply an observer. Instead of believing oneself to be outside the situation, one needs to acknowledge that one is already a fully involved participant. It is involvement - if entered into self-reflectively - and not objectivity which is the condition for understanding.

It is for this reason that the exclusion of hunter-gatherers, *as* hunter-gatherers, from the heart of the forest would represent the imposition of this ideology of separation onto the heart of the forest, and onto the way in which such hunter-gatherers relate to their environment. To say that the Mbuti can move through the heart of the forest but that they must not hunt or gather there, is to say that they must become as alienated from their environment as the embodied experience of objectivity tends to make people in the West alienated from theirs. To hunt and gather is the way in which hunter-gatherers "keep up a dialogue" with their environment (Ingold 1994b: 11), and this dialogue for the Mbuti is as much with themselves as with the forest; not because they are projecting their feelings onto the forest, but because it does not exist as an independent entity separate from the humans who have inhabited and thereby become it.

Allowing the Mbuti to move through the heart of the forest while forbidding them to hunt would impose the embodied experience of the split (between objectivity and subjectivity, and between humans and their environment) evident in most approaches to science and conservation, onto people who are not so preoccupied and dominated by the need to objectify relationships, by the need to possess the world through knowledge by turning relationships into facts.

Taking the reality of human involvement in the environment - and the researchers' involvement in that which they are seeking to understand - as the starting point, the task becomes one of acknowledging and deepening that involvement, rather than restraining or denying it. In the process, the claim to objectivity, to being able to stand outside the phenomenon, can be relinquished. This does not lead to a situation where there can be no appeal to truth, however, for the truth of any situation is no longer seen to reside in static facts, but in dynamic relationships of which the observer is part. This "model of knowledge represents truth as an irreducible, multi-faceted object" (McCall 1995: 267) which can often seem contradictory since different relationships will reveal and obscure different aspects of the truth of a situation as it is apprehended through lived experience. This is to state nothing more than that the methodology of social anthropology - participant observation - is a model for science; rather than a compromise arrived at because humans are not amenable to the same objective observation that the rest of nature is. In fact many would now argue that - in terms of the complex relationships between it's parts - the rest of nature is no more amenable to being understood through 'objectivity' than humans are. Thus it is our participation in, not our separation from, our environment which provides the only real ground for conservation.

Reflections on Environmentalism and Conservation

The final chapter will place the emerging paradigm in conservation within the context of fundamental changes that are occurring in some areas of Western thought; as well as looking at the implications of this research for our understanding of how hunter-gatherers and Western academics understand human/environmental relations.

When conservation or environmentalism operates within the old paradigm, it simply compounds the problem it seeks to confront; and marginalised workers or shifting cultivators are pitted against marginalised nature (and hunter-gatherers fall on one or other side of the line). Instead of taking people's relationship with their environment as the starting point for sustainable livelihoods, that relationship is seen as the prime culprit. This approach attempts to *restrain* human involvement with nature, protecting selected aspects or areas of the environment from humans. Within this paradigm conservation bodies and movements act as an external force exerting power - in the form of carrots and sticks - to restrain, regulate and alter local peoples involvement with their environment. The environmental debate is paralysed when conducted within this paradigm. By responding from within the *emerging* paradigm, which takes as its starting point the desirability of human involvement with the natural world, clear policies emerge.

Clearly sustainable human/environmental relations, in the Ituri Forest and elsewhere, stands little chance if it is imposed from outside. It is likely to be adaptive and coherent only if it emerges from, and is embodied in, real control and decision making by local communities. Mosse points out that 'community' should not, however, be conceived of in "apolitical and ahistorical terms" (1995: 155) and development projects should be aware of the conflicting political interests within any purported community, and be wary of creating new structures which simply create dependency on "outsider inputs and management support" (ibid).

In this light the role of *conservation* is not to protect nature from humans, nor to offer new decision making structures to local communities, but to protect communities relationships with each other and their environment from external abusive power relations. This provides a context in which the awareness of belonging within a community, dwelling in an environment, can continue or be relearnt. A process in which support for the former Bila chief Batomine could override the administrations support for Dieu Donner, and in which local peoples long-term relationship with the forest could take precedence over the destruction caused by braconnieres and incoming gold panners, or by European logging companies in the future.

When Mosse argues that "'community' is an ideal category invariably presented as loss and the goal of development is retrieval of this lost state" (1995: 156, cf. Spencer 1990); he could also be describing the emotional tone of environmentalism and conservation as well. This is evident in the sense of the loss of the natural world, and the growing sense that human extinction is an increasing probability as a result of the headlong rush to maintain, regain, or attain, security through solving the "problem of production" (Schumacher 1974: 10-16). Yet the situation of the *Western 'community'* is itself often seen in "strangely apolitical and ahistorical terms", terms which effectively assume the inevitability of extinction or the necessity for rapid technological advance to save us from this fate, since the subjective premise of a uniquely human personhood (on which the objective historical and political forces rely) is so difficult to perceive as being a cultural construct and therefore as being possible to change. While having provided a route to radical doubt and the possibility of thinking afresh; one of the drawbacks of this initially liberating premise is that it does not recognise the centrality of relationship, of consciousness emerging from within context, and being inherent within matter. Recognising personhood as processual rather than essential, as embedded in relations with human and all other aspects of our environment, enables a recognition that we *are* the state of our community and

environment: a recognition which occurs whenever 'the future generations', 'the ancestors', or 'the forest' are experienced as here and now.

CHAPTER 13 CONCLUSION: Anthropology and Anthropocentrism

After a brief discussion of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, this chapter follows Ingold in arguing that identity, for the Mbuti and other hunter-gatherers, is grounded in a sense of sharing with a living environment. The inherent dualism in Ingold's absolute opposition between Mbuti and Western approaches to the environment is refuted since both the Mbuti and people in the West move between relationships of identification and opposition to their environments.

Cartesian anthropocentrism has never been the only Western understanding, and is itself giving way to an understanding of ourselves as embodying a living environment. However whether - in academic discourse and environmental policy - a real change in our understanding is underway, or whether Cartesian cosmology is simply accelerating to a more refined level, is an open question.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM OR ANTHROPOCENTRISM

> Anthropological accounts make ideas considered self-evident in one culture subject to doubt, subject to comparison with alternative styles common in the other. Anthropology is still embedded in contexts, but it is relatively freer of these contexts because it continually opens itself to a diversity of perspectives that challenge its own (Borofsky 1987: 154).

One of anthropology's explicit tasks is that of highlighting ethnocentrism, enabling us to see fundamental assumptions as products of a particular culture rather than inherent in the nature of being human. However this explicit task rests on the perhaps more fundamental and implicit task of asserting the primacy of our identity as humans who possess culture, in contrast to other species (and our bodily selves) who, we are taught to believe, exist simply within the biological mechanics of nature. Explicit or implicit reference to the belief that humans are distinct from, and superior to, other animals are found in almost all anthropological writings. A simple example is that of Chris Knight (1994: 396) arguing that "chimpanzees and other animal organisms are *not* 'persons', however 'intentional' and even 'creative' they may be"[37]. Another example is Lévi-Strauss who, writing on the incest taboo, states that before the prohibition of incest "culture is still non-existent: with it, nature's sovereignty over man is ended. The prohibition of incest is where nature

37 Examples from anthropology and related disciplines are all-pervasive since the very basis of social science would appear to be the assumption not simply of human uniqueness (in the sense that any species is unique) but of human superiority: that humans are *inherently* different to antelope and leopards in a way that antelope are *not* different to leopards.

transcends itself" (1949: 24-25). The universal presence of this assumption, the need to repeatedly reassert the obvious truth of this 'fact' suggests that it is a belief which requires constant affirmation, rather than a 'fact' of life. This fits with Wolf's description of "the development of an overall hegemonic pattern" as depending

> not so much the victory of a collective cognitive logic or aesthetic impulse as the development of redundancy - the continuous repetition, in diverse instrumental domains, of the same basic propositions regarding the nature of constructed reality (1990: 388).

Ingold's earlier writing reflects this same bias. Taking as his starting point Marx and Engels proposition that men "begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence" (Marx & Engels 1977: 42, in Ingold 1986: 102), he comments that hunters are conventionally seen as collectors rather than producers of food:

> Are we to conclude, in consequence, that for the greater part of his history, man has remained the *prisoner of his organic nature,* destined to perform within the *limitations of his own animality*? It seems as though we are caught on the horns of a dilemma: either we deny the hunters their humanity, or we discover production in every branch of animal life (Ingold 1986: 102).

His resolution of this dilemma in 1988 was to argue that the boundary between the social and the ecological "corresponds to that between the intentional and the behavioural components of action, marking the point - in human life - where purpose takes over from, and proceeds to direct, the mechanism of nature (1988: 285). 'Intentionality', for Ingold, became the key marker which distinguished hunter-gatherers interaction with their environment from that of other species foraging in the same forest or moving across the same tundra.

This analysis neatly restated the mechanistic view of nature - whether nature 'out there' or 'mechanical' human nature. Quoting Durkheim's claim that there are two beings in man, "an individual being which has its foundations in the organism . . . and a social being which represents. . . society" (1976 [1915]: 16, cited in Ingold 1988: 275), Ingold here describes this split between our social and biological selves as being central to our humanity, rather than as one of the central beliefs in our particular culture. This fundamental anthropocentric assumption of anthropology is also evident in the following quote from Godelier: "human beings, in contrast to other social animals, do not just live in society, they produce society in order to live" (cited in Carrithers 1992: 1). Carrithers argues that the fact that we are social animals lies at the very core of what it is to be human, that "[w]e cannot know ourselves except by knowing ourselves in relation to others" (*ibid*)

and that "[n]o other species exhibits such intricacy and fecundity of forms of common life" (1992: 2). The Mbuti, the G/wi, and many other peoples would dispute this last statement.

There are three closely related points about this assumption of superiority and distinctiveness. Firstly, why does this belief - that humans have risen above all other species and our own 'organic nature' - have to be so constantly and habitually reiterated? Secondly, if some societies do not share this belief, then this particular way of relating to other species (or 'nature') is clearly a cultural construct, even though anthropologists write as though it is a factual base line upon which all cultures build. Thirdly, if Carrithers is correct in arguing that "[w]e cannot know ourselves except by knowing ourselves in relation to others", then do not these *others* include not simply the social but the 'so-called' physical environment; and, if this is true, then our relationship with other constituents of the environment, including other species, our own bodies, our 'species life', informs our most fundamental level of 'knowing ourselves'.

The desire to assert that we are separate and superior to other species can, in so far as it represents a fundamental assumption within the tradition of anthropology, be traced back to Descartes. As a social science, anthropology traces its ancestry back through the development of science to people such as Descartes, Bacon and Newton who were among the founding fathers (*sic*) of radical doubt and the scientific method[38]. But this question of similarity or difference from other peoples and other species can also be seen to be a paradox that all peoples studied by anthropologists work with[39]. In as far as this question relates to other species: is being human something more, and different from, being an animal? In G/wi thought:

> humans in nature were seen simply as creatures among many other creatures, without special favour or disadvantage. Mankind had been given a unique but not otherwise special set of abilities to meet a corresponding set of needs through respectful use of the resources that could be found in the habitat (Silberbauer 1994: 131).

In a similar vein Nuttall describes how the Inuit of north-west Greenland, while depending on whaling and sealing for their livelihood, nevertheless say that "animals have souls just as people do" (1991: 218). He continues: "Success in hunting is perceived as entailing a reciprocity based on the exchange of respect . . . The aim is not to scare the seal by

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38 Descarte's Corporeal Ideas hypothesis argued that since sensations do not resemble the objects which cause them, there must be two distinct worlds: the Galilean world of objects, and the world of thinking creatures (Reed 1982, cited in Gordon 1989: 181). Descartes division between the thinking human and the rest of existence (including the human body, other humans and all else) flowed from this hypothesis. A fundamental division enabling relationships to be reduced to objects which can be manipulated by the detached observer.

39 Clearly there are therefore as many different 'anthropocentrisms' as there are cultural understandings of human relations with other species which equate human uniqueness with superiority.

assuming a position of superiority, but to wait until the seal has allowed itself a subordinate position to the hunter in giving itself freely" (1991: 218). In Silberbauer's account the G/wi believe that N!adima, the being who created the fabric of the universe, has given all creatures equal rights to existence: "none is thought to be uniquely favoured by N!adima and to have been set above others by him" (Silberbauer 1981: 53).

At the abstract level, our anthropocentric assumption that humans operate in a distinctly separate and superior sphere to the merely biological one informs the whole of anthropology through the presupposition of the distinction between culture and nature. It is in hunter-gatherer studies, however, that this fundamental assumption becomes clearly visible, in its blatant or tenaciously subtle forms, since here we are dealing with people who may understand their world in a way that is not informed by this anthropocentric premise, while at the same time we are attempting to understand *their* understandings through anthropologists whose writing *is* informed by this premise. How appropriate, for example, is it for Silberbauer to describe animals as 'resources' (above) given that this term carries our impersonal sense of inanimate nature, a sense which would appear to contradict G/wi belief in the living individuality of each species and each member of a species? In hunter-gatherer studies the term *anthropomorphic* is often used as a way of maintaining our anthropocentric bias in the face of informants explicitly stated beliefs that members of other species are as equally endowed with individuality as humans, and informants beliefs that (*contra* Carrithers above) members of other species also interact with each other within intricate social forms and cultures. Here is Silberbauer again:

> the anthropomorphic nature of G/wi ethology [is one] in which . . . Each species is credited with characteristic behaviour, which is governed by its kxodzi (customs), and each has its particular kxwisa (speech, language). . . . The special capabilities of some animals are believed to have been arrived at by rational thought and then institutionalized as elements of the species' kxodzi (customs) after having been passed on by the discoverers or inventors in that population. . . . Some species possess knowledge that transcends that of man (1981: 64).

According to the G/wi, animals would appear to construct and transmit customs, speech and narratives (*contra* Ingold 1994b: 1); thus they actively shape their social world. This is in marked contrast to the anthropocentric assumption in anthropology evident, for example, when Carrithers (1992: 146, emphasis added) writes: "We [humans] *are not just animals* who are passively moulded by our respective societies and cultures . . . ". When Silberbauer comments (1981: 65, emphasis added) that this G/wi ethology is sufficiently perceptive to enable accurate interpretation of behaviour and efficient hunting "*[d]espite* its anthropomorphic bias", we see again how informants belief that other species are as inventive and intentional as humans is concealed. Their appreciation of other creatures intrinsic qualities of individual personhood is concealed by being described as a projection

of 'anthropomorphic bias'. Silberbauer goes on to describe how, when the G/wi are watching a herd to select their target, "hunters classify individual animals by terms used for human attributes of personality and character" (1981: 67). Yet equally they classify individual humans by terms which refer to animals character, such as when describing a harsh or fierce person as xamxasi (literally lionlike [1981: 60]). G/wi understanding of, and interaction with, other species would appear to occur outside of the anthropocentric premise through which we attempt to make sense of human-environmental relations, including those of the G/wi themselves. Their understanding is not anthropomorphic, in the sense of a one way projection from an active social sphere onto a passive natural one, it is - according to Silberbauer's account, although not his explanation - a process of mutual perception and interaction between species, including humans.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF HUNTER-GATHERER EXPERIENCE

Ingold insists that for hunter-gatherers "sharing *underwrites* the autonomy of the person" (1988: 283). In hunting and gathering together, in food sharing within the band, they are not obeying Fortes 'prescriptive altruism', emanating from some abstract thing called society, they are experiencing freely entered into 'companionship' (Ingold 1988: 282). The experience of sharing is in a sense reward enough in itself, a continual re-experiencing of relationship rather than a calculated insurance policy. In this sense, Ingold argues, people in hunting and gathering communities share *one another.*

However, in Ingold's 1988 paper: sharing, as the central experience of both autonomy and community, of being a person in the hunter-gather context, is still separated from, and superior to, the concurrent level of ecological material reality that is going on. At the ecological level he explains hunter-gatherer behaviour simply in terms of being organisms foraging and co-operating in an environment. Within this separation is also the assumed separation from the environment: hunter-gatherers share as persons, a personhood humans do not share with other species or aspects of the environment.

Bird-David takes this exploration of the importance of sharing further, by showing how hunter-gathers often use their experience of the social realm as metaphors with which to describe their relationship with their environment. For example, the Mbuti address the forest as 'mother' or 'father' and beseech it to take care of them in the way that they would expect their parent to. While usefully extending the concept of sharing to hunter-gatherers relationships with their environment, Bird-David only extends it as metaphor. As Ingold points out: in her account "what is taken to be *literally* true of relationships among humans

is assumed to be only *metaphorically* true of dealings with the non-human environment"(1992a: 42). In Bird-David's view of hunter-gatherers, the environment is imbued with meaning through the use of anthropomorphic terms. However, there is still this absolute distinction between the social world where meanings are generated, and the environment onto which a given culture projects meanings. In a similar vein Nuttall accounts for Inuit hunters' description of their relationship with the seals they hunt, by concluding that: "the relationship between the hunter and the hunted is interpreted in anthropomorphic terms" (1991: 218). The point here is that our paradigm creates a conceptual nature/culture division in which, however much we might appreciate hunter-gatherers way of experiencing their environment, we know that it is not actually true. According to this reductionist scientific view: nature is the level of organism, the given, within us; nature is measurable material reality out there.

Anthropology, with its focus on culture, is happy to look at the way our culture culturally constructs nature, and to contrast this to the cultural construction of nature in other cultures. But there is still the absolute belief that separate from, and contrasted to this, there is a real physical world out there as studied by the 'natural' sciences; a physical world which is best understood objectively through the sciences rather than experientially through an individual (or cultures) subjective engagement in it. This is what Ingold calls: our belief in that thing which is "really nature" (Ingold 1994b: 19). Though the cutting edge of science has moved far beyond this dichotomy, most of us - including the humanities - have yet to catch up. So how best can we understand the way that the hunter-gatherers Bird-David refers to experience their environment ?

In responding to Bird-David's work, Ingold argues that where trust is central to the sharing at the heart of hunter-gatherer social reality, this social reality is just one part of a broader reality which includes all aspects of the environment. Rather than *confidence* in the face of unforeseen dangers, these relationships as a whole are characterised by *trust*. "Trust", Ingold suggests, ". . . presupposes an active, prior engagement with the agencies and entities of the environment on which we depend; it is an inherent quality of our relationships with them. To trust others is to act with them in mind, on the expectation that they will do likewise"(1992a: 41). He later added (1994b: 13) that "any attempt to impose a response . . . would represent a betrayal of trust and a negation of the relationship", a relationship which "rests on the recognition of personal autonomy".

This recognition of all aspects of the environment as being 'persons', as being intentional agents endowed with consciousness by the very fact of existence, has been evident in

Mbuti experience of the forest. An unsuccessful hunt is seen as an indication that right relationship needs to be restored within the individual, within the community of the camp, and within the wider community of batata n'endula, the forest/ ancestors. If, instead of the singing which restores harmony, the camp engages in sorcery accusations, then - as Komie was at pains to point out - further division will occur both within the camp and with the batata n'endula.

Feit and Scott make clear that for the Cree[40] all animals are experienced as persons. "Human persons are not set over and against a material context of inert nature, but rather are one species of persons in a network of reciprocating persons" (Scott 1989: 195). Scott writes that for the Cree consciousness is not a human addition to animal life but is understood as a state of being "on the verge of unfolding events, of continuous birth" (*ibid*). Feit, writing of the Waswanipi Cree, says: "the animals, the winds and many other phenomena are thought of as being 'like persons' in that they act intelligently and have wills and idiosyncrasies, and understand and are understood by men" (Feit 1973: 116). The division between culture and nature has no place in this context, a context in which everything is recognised and experienced as possessing consciousness[41], as being persons. A recognition which has consequences for intraspecies and intrahuman relations, since animals will not come to hunters who have killed unnecessarily, or who have not shared the meat fairly within the human community[42]. For the Cree there is a direct engagement between all aspects of the environment - the goose and the human are mutually aware and share the same quality of consciousness; a belief or experience that is in direct contrast to Western assumptions that "human cultural intelligence is . . . such as no other species has or can acquire" (Trevarthen & Logotheti 1989: 167).

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40 Scott and Feit's writing was drawn to my attention by a seminar paper of Ingold's, which I do not quote since it asks not to be cited without the authors permission. It was titled 'Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment', at the *Beyond nature and culture: cognition, ecology and domestication* symposium at Kyoto & Atami March 1992.

41 cf Willis: "Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle recognized . . . that nature at the most elementary level . . . was possessed of a kind of consciousness" (1994: xxvii)

42 Carrithers recognises that "the moral and, we now realize, practical consequences of conceiving ourselves as fellows with other animals, and with the natural world, could be very beneficial (1992: 53). While this reflects Cree belief, it does not reflect Cree experience that moral and practical consequences are inseparable. The rich metaphorical nature of language is evident here for although, in this context, "conceiving ourselves" carries the Cartesian assumption of the mind as separate from experience; "*conceiving* ourselves as fellows with other animals" also carries a meaning akin to Cree conceptions of all life as being "on the verge of unfolding events, of continuous *birth*" (Scott 1989: 195). Reflecting on words such as 'conceive', 'inspire', 'warm', 'reflect', 'incorporate', etc., it is hard to agree with Lienhardt (1985:150) that: "In modern English. moral and mental conditions are spoken of in more or less abstract terms (anger, suspicion, forgetfulness and so on), cut off, for most, from their etymological roots." The roots are there, the embodied nature of our experience is present in our language, although we may choose not to see it.

For the environment is - for some hunter-gatherers if not for ourselves - differentiated into a myriad of persons whether they are mutually aware of this or not: "humanity and nature merge, for them, into a single field of relationships" (Ingold 1994b: 18). So should one conclude, not that such hunter-gatherers are on the 'state of nature' side of our division of reality, but that in a sense such hunter-gatherers are on the reality side, not caught up in Descartes division of 'nature' into the conscious human and the world of objects? Despite Ingold's frequent recourse to Marx, his whole approach appears to be Weberian. In describing the difference between hunter-gatherer and Western ways of experiencing the environment, he would appear to be setting up ideal types. A method which is highly effective in illuminating difference, but misleading if expected to render the complex diversity that makes up an individual or a society.

If our process of knowing is developed and expressed through our physical interaction with our environment (Bloch 1989, 1992), then the nature of that interaction should shed light on different societies ways of 'knowing'[43]. Following the logic of Ingold's argument, it might be useful to recall his comparison between hunter-gatherers - who's co-operative hunting and gathering he describes as characterised by companionship - and workers who's labour power is "co-operated" and alienated by their employer. He cites Marx' description of workers in the manufacturing process: "in the labour process they have already ceased to belong to themselves" (Marx 1930: 349); and, Ingold adds, "Whatever relations exist between them as selves, that is as persons, must therefore be extrinsic to the labour process" (1986: 278).

Perhaps one could say that to the extent that our thinking and experiencing is co-opted into the production process of manufacturing this belief in essential separateness (and all the power relations which flow from this), our personhood is extrinsic to our lives. To the extent that we think and act and experience outside of that production process, we regain our personhood, our ability to live as 'undivided centres of action and awareness'[44], relating to others in the awareness that they are also such centres. Although this reality underlies hunter-gatherer experience of inter-subjective sociality and companionship, both among humans and with the other aspects of the environment, it runs totally counter to the Cartesian mentalist assumption, an assumption which - up to a point - the work of Ingold (above), Damasio, Gibson and Trevarthen all profoundly question. I will return to the

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43 "All science is an attempt to . . . learn something about the very nature of explanation, to make clear some part of that most obscure matter - the process of knowing" (Bateson, 1958: 280). The profound difference between 'the process of knowing' people in the West and hunter-gatherers engage in is evident in our physical interaction with the environment.
44 An expression borrowed from Ingold's Kyoto seminar paper.

writing of these last three authors after placing Ingold's interpretation of Mbuti experience in the context of my own research.

It is important to note that the logic of Ingold's argument reflects a broader shift in thinking about human-environmental relations in the West. In its more extreme form this shift appears to be an attempt to escape the anthropocentric paradigm, and discard the illusion that, as Keith Thomas put it, our well-being has to depend on "a ruthless exploitation of other forms of . . . life" (1983: 303). Instead, this emerging way of thinking suggests that our well-being can be measured by the degree to which we manage to transform relationships of extraction and protection (or, one could say, of abuse and its denial) into ones grounded in interdependence and trust. In the context of conservation in the Ituri, we have seen that this process begins whenever conservation works to restrain the impact of imposed power relations, and so actively trusts local people to recreate and reinvigorate community through acting in the long term interests of their relationship with their environment.

IS INGOLDS' & BIRD-DAVIDS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE MBUTI CORRECT?

The major flaw in Ingold's argument (and in much radical thinking about human-environmental relations, including the way I have phrased the argument in the preceding part of this chapter) appears to me to be in its rendition of different cultures (in this case the West on the one hand, and the Mbuti or G/wi on the other) as being in some sense monolithic and uniform in their experience, beliefs and practice. Opposing Westerners perception of their environment in Ingolds work (or Bila perceptions in Turnbull's work) to that of hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti, illuminates the difference that exists between these as opposing ideal types, but does not reveal the complexity of the actual interactions with other aspects of the environment individuals actually engage in. Morris argues (1995: 206) that it is a mistake to take a "monolithic view of specific cultures" and to see pre-literate communities "as having only a 'sacramental' vision of nature"; just as it is a mistake to see Western culture as containing only an ethic of domination, "thus completely ignoring the diversity and the changing nature of the Western cultural tradition". While suggesting that the 'ethic of domination' towards animal life began with the advent of agriculture (1995: 304), Morris's analysis of Malawian farmers attitudes towards the natural world suggests that the two attitudes, the "sacramental egalitarian - associated with hunter-gatherers", and "the ethic of opposition and control - associated with agriculturalists, do in fact co-exist" (1995: 305). Both these attitudes are present among the Mbuti, but we

misconstrue their relationship with their environment if we see it as being between two fundamentally different worlds: the human and the natural. This is a perception of the situation expressive of our Cartesian understanding, and is one which may misrepresent Western experience as fully as it misrepresents that of the Mbuti.

By setting up an opposition between Western and hunter-gatherer approaches to the environment Ingold uses a strategy similar to Dumont's conceptual opposition between hierarchy and equality (Dumont 1980, 1986; MacFarlane 1993). Here the opposition is between the Mbuti for whom one can see the centrality of an equality of inclusion in relation to each other and the environment, and Western individuality built on opposition to others and the environment. Put like this I am clearly framing the discussion within a Western framework by giving primacy to opposition. However, I am not suggesting that the Western societies of the north Atlantic represent one pole and hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti represent another in reality. This Weberian ideal type rendition of their differing approaches to social relations has been a useful place to begin, before examining the ways in which both poles are clearly present both for the Mbuti (Chapters 6 and 8) and for people in the West.

One of the central arguments of this thesis has been that Ingold and Turnbull are mistaken to posit a single Mbuti and a single Western or Bila perspective, where there are in fact a range of perspectives. For example Turnbull concentrates on Mbuti identification with the forest, in opposition to Bila fear of the forest. However, this fear or identification (by both Mbuti and Bila) is not with the forest alone, but with the forest as brought alive by people: by the ancestors. If the Mbuti see their forest as alive and worthy of respect, it is because they see their ancestors as alive in the forest and worthy of respect. The forest is not simply some separate parent, godhead, or spirit, to whom respect is due; it is also their parents. Its being alive is experienced and expressed in terms of past and present interaction between its constituent parts: be they human, animal or plant life.

The selective nature of Turnbull's reading of Mbuti social life is the result both of historical circumstance, and of his wish to paint a picture of the Mbuti as living in harmony and of the Bila as being preoccupied with dominion. In perpetuating Turnbull's sharp distinction between the Bila, who as cultivators make offerings to the ancestors, and the Mbuti, who as hunter-gatherers relate to the forest as a parent who gives unconditionally, both Bird-David and Ingold continue to impose a Western dualistic perspective.

It is ironic that Ingold perpetuates a dualistic analysis by suggesting an intellectual divide between living humans and living forest, and suggesting that hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti see both as equally alive and intentional where we in the West see only the human half of the divide as truly alive. This results in Ingold becoming caught in an internal contradiction: he claims he is not wanting to impose a picture of 'noble savage in harmony with nature' on such people as the Mbuti, and promptly goes on to do just that. The contradiction results from following Turnbull in making an unbridgeable opposition between the Bila cultivators and Mbuti hunter-gatherers perceptions of their physical and social environment, when in fact opposition is but one of many ways of expressing the interdependence evident both at the level of economy and belief. This interdependence is reflected in the fact that the Mbuti relate to the forest not so much (*contra* Turnbull 1965: 252) as a spirit or godhead whom they affectionately address as mother or father; they relate to the forest as being their ancestors and themselves. Thus to the extent that they consider the forest to be a parent, it is in the sense of being absolutely full of real parents who are now dead - or rather who are now alive as forest, or in the forest; as expressed in the statement that "the forest and the ancestors are the same. They are one".

My interpretation of Mbuti experience of the forest finds interesting parallels in the work of Laura Rival on the perceptions of the forest of the Amazonian Huaorani 'food collectors' of Ecuador. The central dilemma I am faced with in attempting to reconcile the Ingold/Bird-David view (that for the Mbuti the forest is alive and sacred in itself), with my understanding of Mbuti cosmology (that it is the ancestors *as* forest who are revered, not the forest *per se*), appears to find it's resolution in Rival's description of Huaorani visits to peach palm tree groves which have been planted by their ancestors:

> Such visits . . . provide a crucial link between past and present generations of 'we-people'. It is this link which makes the forest a 'giving environment', since living people, receiving nourishment from the past (palm fruit are seen to result from the activities and lives of past generations) ensure the feeding of future generations through their present *consumption* activities. . . . [the groves] are a source of pride, security and rejoicing, the concrete and material sign of continuity (1993: 642).

Thus for the Huaorani, as for the Mbuti, the forest is made a 'giving environment' by virtue of the 'link between past and present generations'. This emphasis on the link between generations as being the key to their experience of the forest as alive and a 'giving environment' would appear to run counter to Bird-David's definition of the 'giving environment'. This description of the Huaorani places their experience of human relations with (past and future) humans at the heart of the experience of the forest as a living and giving environment, whereas for both Ingold and Bird-David the point is that the forest is

in itself (literally or metaphorically) seen as a living being who provides for, and shares with, its people, just as they do with each other. However Rival also says that:

> there does not seem to be, in this context, a metaphorical projection of society upon nature. It is the link between successive human generations which make the peach palm grove a *gift* from the dead . . . (Rival: in press).

This passage restates the Western anthropocentric assumption. Either the groves are seen as an actual gift from their parents, their ancestors, in the sense that they "result from the activities of previous generations"; or they are seen as a gift from their sharing parent, the forest, in which case this is "a metaphorical projection of society upon nature". The notion that there might not be such a split between society and nature, between previous generations and the forest, is not entertained[45]. Of course, this may well be because the Huaorani make a similar split to the one made in Western thought; the usefulness of Rival's work for me was that it woke me to the fact that for the Mbuti the link between generations is the key to their experience of the forest as being alive and a 'giving environment'.

The story Turnbull tells (and which Ingold and Bird-David retell) of the Mbuti experiencing the forest as alive, sacred, and parental *in itself,* is certainly one way of interpreting Mbuti experience, for example in the hunt and in the molimo singing. At the other extreme is the cheerful cutting down of the forest to make fields in the period leading up to the nkumbi, the use of anything from Za's lucky charms to Yuma's witchcraft accusations to make sure the antelope are caught in one's own net and not that of another, and collective ritual at the endékélélé directed at the ancestors to increase the number of antelope extracted from the forest to exchange with villagers for agricultural produce. The integrating experience at the centre of this spectrum is an awareness of the forest as embodying the presence, activities, stories and power of previous generations. This would appear to be a direct contradiction of the Bird-David/ Ingold thesis (it is certainly a direct contradiction of the one sidedness of Turnbull's picture). However it may be less a contradiction, than an encouragement to take their thesis a step further.

In attempting to reconcile Ingold and Bird-David's work with my understanding of Mbuti cosmology, my problem may well be my own ingrained dualism. Ingold argues that:

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[45] This distinction between the metaphorical and the literal, rather than illuminating the way people experience the world, may itself simply be a restatement of the insistence on a division between the imagination and the 'real nature' of things, the central aspect of which is assumed - in the West - to be the experience of division and opposition. Thin suggests that "there are play-elements in the most serious activities, just as there are metaphors in the 'hardest' of scientific language" (1991: vii); to use a term such as "'metaphor' is itself an act of metaphoric predication which imbues characteristics of illusion, intangibility and absence on the behaviour referred to, while the words 'reality' or 'literal' are metaphors which ascribe characteristics of seriousness, tangibility, and presence" (1991: 240).

> Hunter-gatherers do not, as Westerners are inclined to do, draw a Rubicon separating human beings from all non-human agencies, ascribing personhood exclusively to the former whilst relegating the latter to an inclusive category of things. (1992a: 42).

In my initial attempts to apply Ingold's thesis to the Mbuti I may simply have attempted to reverse the usual flow of our dualism. Replacing the usual picture of forager-forest relations (in which the forest is seen as inert and present for human use: both materially and symbolically; e.g. Ellen 1982), with one in which the forest is seen as a living independent entity sharing with its human inhabitants. The dualism of the earlier picture is retained in the second, since the forest is still seen as essentially separate from its human inhabitants. In Ingolds words: "The[se] nonhuman constituents of the environment . . . , imbued with personal powers, are indeed supposed to act with the people in mind." (1992a: 42, emphasis added).

I would suggest that while usefully restoring the living nature of the environment to our understanding of the experience of people such as the Mbuti, Ingold nevertheless does not join them in crossing 'the Rubicon'. This would involve recognising that the aliveness of the forest and the presence of past and future generations are inextricably linked. In an important sense the forest is not a "nonhuman constituent of the environment" at all. Not only does the Rubicon not exist; the relationship between people and a separate benevolent forest (which Ingold follows Turnbull in describing) does not exist. This is simply one among many ways of experiencing the forest as being alive, not independently of humans but through interaction with humans, an interaction often acknowledged and expressed through addressing the forest as ancestor.

Perhaps in attempting to describe hunter-gatherers' experience of a living environment we are attempting to describe a vital aspect to being human in *any* culture (or, indeed, of being alive in any species). Carrithers suggests that attributing intention to ones' environment is a particularly human, rather than particularly hunter-gatherer, ability. "We are particularly good at imagining and understanding things, even material things, when we attribute intentions or plans to them" (1992: 45). He quickly adds:

> This does not, of course, mean that we need really to believe that inanimate objects have minds. For example, a cabinet-maker I know talks of old wood as 'wanting to split', and a painter I know speaks of certain kinds of paint as 'wanting to lift' and even 'getting tired and wanting to let go'; yet they certainly do not believe that wood or paint are actually persons (1992: 45).

Given the constraints of Western dualism we 'of course' 'certainly' wouldn't want to 'believe that'. The examples Carrithers chooses are, however, highly illuminating. They

refer to work which involves an individual responding to - and shaping - the physical world[46].

Carrithers goes on to say that "recent psychological research . . . shows there to be an 'interactional bias' in human thinking. That is, we do indeed tend to reason as if the inanimate world were human- or animal-like, made in the image of thinking, planning, intending beings" (1992: 45). So whether this attribution of intentionality to a living environment is seen as reflecting a real belief (as Ingold suggests for the Mbuti), or as reflecting a useful imaginative conceit (as Carrithers suggests for his friends), depends on the status we give to the imagination. If we consider the imagination from a Cartesian perspective, as something obscuring our view of the hard facts of life, then the most it may achieve is a status as craftsmanship or art. If the imagination is experienced as centrally important then it may be a way of understanding, mediating and experiencing relationship within the world. We have seen the imagination in this central mediating sense in, for example, the nature of the molimo singing.

Thus whether one views this experience of an intentional living environment as being real or imaginary, the experience is one which Western people (to the extent that they are not caught up in a Cartesian world view) to some extent share with the Mbuti. Just as the Mbuti can share what we characterise as a dominating approach to their environment - as was evident when Yuma sought to control both other people and the forest/ancestors in the molimo. Taking Ingold's opposition of these ideal types a step further through examining anthropocentrism in anthropology is, I believe, a useful way of becoming aware of the limitations inherent in attempting to make sense of hunter-gatherer or our own relationship with our environment within the limitations of the Cartesian world view which dominates our thinking about environmental issues.

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[46] The abstractions 'culture' and 'nature' both begun as words used to describe process. Nature described the quality or process inherent in something (e.g. the nature of wood is to split). Culture described the process of cultivating or tending something (e.g. cultivating the land). Gradually during the period between 1500 and 1800 nature also became a noun, not simply a name for the inherent force which directs the world (and possibly human beings), but from the 17th century it became a name for the material world, something that might include humans but more often is seen as being in opposition to humans and their culture (Thomas 1983). Likewise the word culture came to be a noun describing the state of development of human society, usually (from the 18th century) as a way of describing the advancement of progress, civilisation and development, particularly through identifying these with the advancement of science and technology (Williams 1976: 184-189).

The changing meaning of these words reflects the changing relationship between humans and the environment in our society. The emerging meaning of nature has been as the material world in its raw or compromised state; the emerging meaning of culture has been as an advanced state of humanity. In a sense they became polar opposites similar to Descartes opposition between body and mind; but their roots are in parallel processes of attention to change, of being able to work with the grain of the wood, or the lie of the land: as verbs these processes are in relation not opposition.

THE HEGEMONY OF CARTESIAN THOUGHT

Fundamental cultural beliefs are more evident in the mundane assumptions and habitual repetitions (Wolf 1990: 388), than in the clash of ideas or beliefs; since the latter are often clashes between opposing interpretations of these assumptions rather than fundamental challenges to them.

For example, Morris points out that "the mechanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment with its rigid dualism" was challenged and changed by "the fundamental re-orientation of thought initiated in the nineteenth century by Hegel and Darwin, by the rise of the biological sciences, and by the development of historical understanding, anthropology and the social sciences more generally" (1995: 303). Carrithers makes a similar point when he claims that Darwin's view of humans as being created from animals rather being specially created by a deity, sharply contradicted "an attitude of human specialness which is so deeply ingrained in North Atlantic thought that it need not acknowledge its Christian source" (1992: 53). However this habit is so deeply ingrained that it forms the basis for the very book (*Why Humans have Cultures*) Carrithers makes this statement in; for Darwinian thought supplemented rather than replaced Cartesian thought. The ability to constantly move between an emphasis on absolute opposition and an emphasis on gradual development has been a constant presence in Western thinking. According to Thomas (1983: 17-41) pre-Cartesian European thought and religious belief saw animals both as completely different to man (as present simply for our use), and also saw animals and humans as existing within the 'great chain of being'. It thus embraced both the dualist and gradualist views which were later reformulated as Cartesian dualism and Darwinian evolution; reformulations which implied the inevitability of development and progress through the power of reason, and through the notion that the higher evolves from the lower. As Morris has pointed out, the 'ethic of domination' could be argued to have arisen with the advent of agriculture (1995: 304); but it would be dangerous to impute to technological changes fundamental changes in belief systems. We have seen, in contrasting the Bila and the Lese, that fundamentally different beliefs and forms of sociality can be present despite relatively identical subsistence modes; and - more to the point - the 'relational' and the 'domination' ethics are ever present possibilities for the Mbuti, just as they are for people in the West.

Wolf argues that "ideology may mediate contradictions but it cannot resolve them. Alternative systems of ideas and ideologically charged behaviour are continuously generated by the operations of the modes themselves" (1990: 390). Thus alternative ways

of understanding and behaving may be being generated by the modes themselves - as Capra (1982) and Willis (1990) suggest in physics - or by contradictions such as that between the economic beliefs and activity our culture is engaged in, and the tangible disastrous impact most of us appear to believe this is having on the immediate and wider world: the personal, social and environmental fabric.

However if Cartesian mind/matter dualism *is* being superseded, it may well not be by a mutualist awareness of interdependence but by an intensification of opposition at a more refined conceptual level. Thus the notion that we can treat the planet as an infinite resource is, for many commentators, being replaced by the notion that the planet must be managed by the experts - the scientific technological elite (Hardin in Simmons 1993: 122; Heilbronner & Falk in Caldwell 1990: 72-73). The interrelationship of humans and other life forms is increasingly recognised (Brundtland et all, 1987), and the planet is increasingly seen as a living whole against the backdrop of the lifeless void of the universe (Lovelock 1979, Sachs 1994). This replicates Cartesian dualism in a new form: the earth as a whole (managed by humans) against the backdrop of the lifeless universe, replaces our seeing humans (elevated by our capacity for culture and thought) as significant and civilised against the backdrop of raw nature. Within anthropology this attempt to collapse the nature/culture divide is undertaken through establishing a continuum over time between nature and culture (Carrithers 1990). Humans being seen as having evolved a capacity for culture as part of their process of adaptation and natural selection; and thus being superior by contrast with other life forms, being significant in contrast to others.

The story of evolution is told as if we increasingly remove ourselves from the base nature of other creatures and ourselves, rather than simply being the story of all creatures changing over time. Yet we have not descended from the existing rocks, plants and other animals; any more than we have descended from contemporary hunter-gatherers. While the Cartesian impulse to objectify relationships enabled the development of technology, the Darwinian view of evolution is used to mirror the 'ethic' of capitalism in exalting competition as 'natural'. As Williams has pointed out, however, evolutionary beliefs about nature being the selective breeder, governing through laws of survival and extinction, do not fit with the diversity of relations in nature, which range "from inherent and inevitable bitter competition to inherent mutuality or co-operation" (1976: 189). Essentially the Western cosmology, embodied in both the Cartesian and Darwinian approaches, denies the mutuality of relationship and sanctions the twin feelings of superiority and alienation. It sanctions the way political economy approaches the world out there; and the way political economy is refracted through the personal experience that meaning (order) has to be

imposed on a meaningless (chaotic) world, denying the reality that meaning (in poetry, thought, the world) arises through relationship, as an expression of relationship.

Just as Wilmsen's (1989) analysis of the !Kung would appear to deny their history, while imposing on them the history of other peoples (Grinker 1994); so a focus on ideology (such as Wolf's, or such as I have engaged in in this section) prioritises Western ideology in a way which ignores the persistence of peoples creativity. Foucault's *archaeology of knowledge,* his history of division, of the way in which people are continually resisting and recreating discourses of domination in the West (Ramazanoglu 1993), is only one side of the story; and it is to the other side of Western experience, to the ecology of experience, the reality of relatedness, that I now wish to turn.

THE ECOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE

In *Descartes Error* (1994) Damasio, a professor of neurobiology, argues that bodily sensations, gut feelings, and emotions, are at the heart of the minds decision making process: emotion is at the heart of reason rather than being opposed to it. Thus consciousness is a consequence of, and present in, all of our bodily selves rather than residing in a mental state which differs from our physicality.

Likewise Gibson's ecological approach to perception directly contradicts the 'old doctrine' that we are only able to approach the environment through the diverse determining lenses of different cultures (1979: 258). In the 'old doctrine' the mind is believed to be separate from, and superior to, nature, and "seeing something is quite unlike knowing something" (Gibson 1979: 258). It is concepts which endure and which make sense of the bodies sensations which are only fleeting and temporary. In this earlier understanding, the chaotic images that are picked up by the eye can only be made sense of by learnt cultural concepts which impose order on chaotic experience once the information has been received by the brain. This approach assumes an essential separation between the mental and the physical, implying that all we can know are images of the world (Gordon 1989: 150) since our minds are separate from our bodies and the world around us, and there is no direct relationship between the individual and the environment.

This approach is evident in anthropology in the notion that cultural concepts are needed to impose order on raw nature: "in a chaos of shifting impressions" (Douglas 1966: 36), order is achieved by the individuals "perceptual controls" structured by imposed "cultural constraints" (Douglas 1982:1).

In the 'old doctrine' the mind is separate from, and superior to, nature. It is concepts which endure and which make sense of sensation which is only fleeting and temporary: "whereas knowing is having permanent concepts stored in memory" (Gibson 1979: 258). This elevation of the enduring mind above transient sensation mirrors Ortner's view that men are seen as free to create enduring culture while women are encumbered by the transience of their bodily involvement in 'species life' (1974). In contrast to this, Weiner demonstrates that for the Trobrianders it is women's work which endures, whereas it is men who seek temporary permanence through securing their fame in kula exchange (1988). In contrast to the Cartesian split between the mind and the body - and the identification of men with the mind, permanence and culture, and women with the body, transience and nature - Gibson argues for continuity: "To perceive the environment and to conceive it are different in degree but not in kind. One is continuous with the other" (258).

Just as Damasio argues that reason and consciousness are embodied rather than residing in some separate mental realm; so in the ecological approach to perception the individual is understood as moving through the landscape (Gibson 1979: 303), seeing objects in context and picking up information through bodily sensations. "The parts of it he can name are called concepts, but," Gibson asserts, they "are nothing but partial abstractions from a rich but unitary perception" (1979: 261). In other words, seeing and understanding precede cognition and conceptualisation. We see far more than we can think, but this does not mean that chaos lurks beyond the bounds of our concepts (threatening nature beyond taming culture) for it is a 'unitary perception', contiguous and continuing.

Trevarthen's research stresses that from at least the moment of birth, an individual is self-aware and can "enter into an exchange of feelings", the experience of inter-subjective sociality is present from the start (Trevarthen & Logotheti 1989: 167). By co-operating, we reason with feelings; and the co-operative mental powers in infants means that the biological and cultural can no longer be seen as mutually exclusive categories. Thus "the human mind does not build itself, at least not in childhood, by power of reason and by mastery of emotions, as Descartes thought, but by emotional regulation of a sharing of ideas with others. Private reason, the thinking 'I' postulated by Descartes, stands in contrast with the idea of a self with feelings that flourish in a community. The former depends upon the latter" (Trevarthen & Logotheti 1989: 181); but the Western 'I' learns to deny that dependency.

Gibson, Damasio and Trevarthen point to a very different awareness of human subjectivity and intersubjectivity, one which runs counter to the Cartesian mentalist assumption of the isolation of the individual, and of the need for the mind, the culture, the adult, to *impose* order on otherwise chaotic experience. The experience of interdependence, of inherent order emerging from within relationship, in fact appears to be fundamental to consciousness of self and other in Western society; just as it evidently is in Cree, G/wi and Mbuti societies. However even when one pillar of the palace of alienation is removed as being a distortion of experience, it is often removed in a way which strengthens the pillars around it. This is the case, for example, when Trevarthen & Logotheti state that: "Human cultural intelligence is seen to be founded on a level of engagement of minds, or intersubjectivity, *such as no other species has or can acquire"* (1989: 167, emphasis added).

The reductionist notion that we can reduce personhood to the human individual, and within the individual to a mentality that is separate from the body, would appear to be ill-founded. Thus the idea that individual organisms are "by nature, closed to each other" (Durkheim 1960 [1914]: 337, in Ingold 1990b: 211), would appear to reflect the dominant Western belief system but not the underlying nature of experience for people in the West as elsewhere; for "life itself depends on the fact that organisms are not closed but open systems" (Ingold, ibid). Turning selfish gene theory on its head, Ingold asks whether "when all is said and done, are not organisms and persons but relationships way of making further relationships?" (1990b: 225).

At a fundamental level personhood in the world would appear to be better represented as the consciousness present in the relationship between different aspects of the environment, rather than as the possession of discrete human (or animal) individuals in isolation.

For the Cree, consciousness is not a human addition to animal life but is understood as a state of being "on the verge of unfolding events" (Scott 1989: 195) and "the animals, the winds and many other phenomena are thought of as being 'like persons' in that they . . . understand and are understood by men" (Feit 1973: 116). Similarly, Trevarthen's research demonstrates that "communicating with persons is possible from birth" (1993: 121); and, if we drop the word 'human' from the following sentence, it could equally well apply to Mbuti, G/wi or Cree experience of all aspects of their environment (including humans):

> It is in the nature of ['human'] consciousness to experience being experienced: to be an actor who can act in relation to other conscious sources of agency, and to be a source of emotions while accepting emotional qualities of vitality and feeling from other persons by instantaneous empathy (Trevarthen 1993: 121).

Thus, although Western culture places great importance on the particular form of cultural knowledge gained by isolating aspects of reality and reconfiguring them in inventive ways, the core of this isolated cognitive experience of self is still an embodied experience of interrelationship:

> The core of every human consciousness appears to be an immediate, unrational, unverbalized, conceptless, totally atheoretical potential for rapport of the self with another's mind (ibid)

Trevarthen makes a fundamental leap towards inclusiveness by arguing that both our core and 'highest' ability is something humans of all cultures and all ages share: there is no opposition here between base nature and high culture. So from where does the alienation (self from society), the isolation (the questions of structure and agency), arise? The argument of this thesis is that it arises from exclusion, from the division of the world (including ourselves) into persons and things. If we possess *real* consciousness, but they do not possess it at all, or not in the same quality: then we cannot trust that they will act in all our best interests, and so our well being must depend on coercion, on controlling them. If they possess consciousness, then our well being depends on the rapport, rather than control, we can achieve with them.

Although this rapport may be morally and practically beneficial to us as a species (cf. Carrithers 1992: 53), it is impossible to achieve through seeking ever more effective control; as those implementing conservation policies in Central Africa often discover, and as Dieu Donner and Yuma discovered as their fear outstripped their attempt to impose control. Rapport is secured only by relinquishing control through trusting relationship (cf. Ingold 1994b: 13). A trust which itself creates the conditions for inclusion and understanding: as Carolyne found as she came face to face with one of the colobus monkeys she was tracking, and as Bisaili found when he walked over to share Banyé and Alimoya's evening meal despite having disparaged Mbuti women. Relinquishing control, and trusting the emerging patterns of relationship, is also what happens during the weaving of harmonies amongst the Mbuti singers, and between the singers and the forest, in the night-long molimo. It also happens when they stay alert to each other and the ever-changing forest during the net hunt. The molimo and the hunt mirror each other: as individuals move on the edge of the unknown, "on the verge of unfolding events", and in this situation it is easier to experience personhood as the consciousness that emerges out of relationship, rather than as a possession which the individual's mind must defend.

When the Bélélé says to Nahto "I am always here, I never die", it is not simply speaking to the camp as the spirit of the forest/ancestors, but as the voice of the Mbuti camp itself since

the figure is Za, Nahto's brother, covered in leaves. The power of its presence is in its ambiguity, in its representing the meeting point, in the openness of one aspect of the environment to another. The consciousness of self and other present in the exchange with the Bélélé is in the awareness of the forest as alive and the camp as able to both meet and represent that unending presence: the same presence which they embody in the molimo.

The research of Gibson, Trevarthen and Damasio implies that the Western split between the individual humans mind and the passive environment including our bodies is - like Durkheim's split between the social being and the biological being in man (1914: 337, cited in Ingold 1990: 211) - untrue not only for the Mbuti, the Cree and the G/wi, but also for people in the West. However, the paradigm which sees culture, the mind, and humans, as separate from and superior to nature, the body, and other species and 'things' continues to define the boundary between 'us' and 'them'. People in the West disagree over where to place the boundary, but the insistence on the division between persons and things persists. The boundary is usually placed between humans and all other species, but increasingly 'human-like' sociality is attributed to dolphins, whales, primates, perhaps even all other animals; Ingold (1990) goes so far as to place the boundary between organic species and other things such as crystals, but even here the boundary itself nevertheless remains.

In the context of conservation and environmentalism, for example, Greenpeace activists claim 'personhood' for whales whilst seeing cod entirely as 'things'; while the Icelandic whalers they oppose see neither cod nor whales as 'human-like' but simply as resources (Einarsson 1993). Unlike Nuttal's Inuit (1991) who relate to the seal and whale both as persons *and* as potential lunch; the Greenpeace activist and the Icelandic whaler operate within a Western paradigm, differing only over where to draw the line between persons and things. The fundamental mistake that Ingold makes - in contrasting hunter-gatherers such as the Mbuti with people in the West - is in assuming that the experience of a living environment is necessarily one characterised by trust, and in assuming that it is only open to hunter-gatherers when it appears, in fact, to be the underlying experience of humans everywhere. If our relationship with our environment is not recognised and attended to, then we are at the mercy of the meanings we make in our interaction with it, thinking them to be the unalterable reality rather than a reflection of the state of the relationship.

Freiburg in Germany provides a good example of a community moving beyond a powerless relationship with the environment, by recognising their part in creating it (Vidal 1994: 14). Parents in a particular area were too frightened for their children's safety to let them walk to school because there was too much traffic speeding too fast, and because the

streets were therefore empty of other children and parents. The meaning that had been created was one in which the environment - including its human component - was infused with fear, an echo of the fear Yuma conjured up to bolster his power in the 'plastic' molimo. Parents addressed the problem in two ways: on the one hand they lobbied for the roads in the vicinity of the primary school to have a very low speed limit placed on them, and on the other hand they agreed amongst themselves to stop driving their children to school. Thus in place of isolated protective parents making the streets unsafe by hurrying their children to school in cars, they collectively created an environment in which it was safe to walk to school in the company of other children and parents. This process is reminiscent of the molimo restoring right relationship among the members of the camp and the forest; for it is not simply a change in meanings being projected onto the environment, it is a change in the tangible physical and emotional experience of interaction with the environment, including people as part of the environment.

Thus, although Mbuti hunter-gatherers tend towards an identification with an environment which they recognise as suffused with personhood, and although Western people learn to experience personhood as existing in opposition to a world of things; both are capable of moving between these poles of experience.

To establish trust - both with the environment and with other people within that environment - is something that has to be continually worked at; as was evident in Freiburg, and as we have seen with the Mbuti. If the consequence of such work is that one is able to identify ones own well-being with the well-being of the whole environment of which one is a part, then there may be little practical difference between experiencing the environment as alive with personhood and powerful ancestors, and investing it with anthropomorphic qualities through imaginative empathy and through an awareness of the vulnerability of future generations to ones present actions.

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